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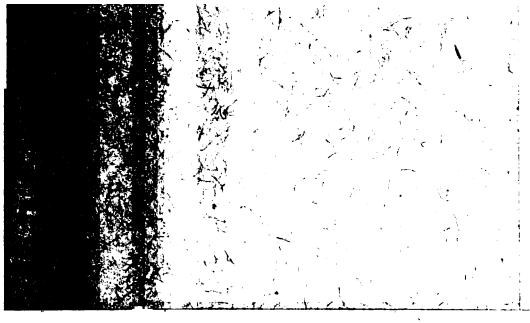

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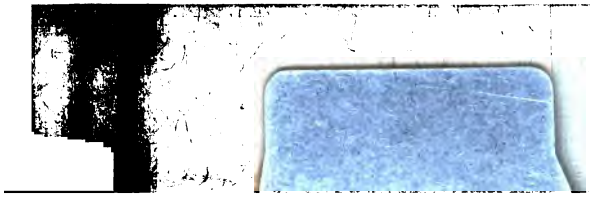

Cowper

THE

LIFE

AND

POSTHUMOUS WRITINGS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

.....

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

.....

VOL. III.

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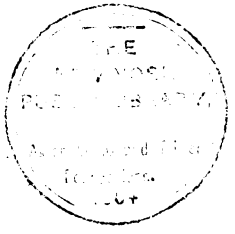


LIFE OF COWPER.

.....

LETTER XL.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,

Your kind but very affecting letter found me not at Weston, to which place it was directed, but in a bower of my friend Hayley's garden, at Eartham, where I was sitting with Mrs. Unwin. We both knew, the moment we saw it, from whom it came, and observing a red seal, both comforted ourselves that all was well at Burwash; but we soon felt that we were called not to rejoice, but to mourn with you: we do indeed sincerely mourn with you; and if it will afford you any consolation to know it, you may be assured that every eye here has testified what our hearts have suffered for you. Your loss is great, and your disposition, I perceive, such as exposes you to feel the whole weight of it. I will not add to your sorrow, by a vain attempt to assuage it: your own good sense, and the piety of your principles, will, of course, suggest to you the most powerful motives of acquiescence in the will of God. You will be sure to recollect that the stroke, severe as it is, is not the stroke of an enemy, but of a father; and will find, I trust, hereafter, that, like a father, he has done you good by it. Thousands have been able to say, and myself as loud as any of them, it has been good for me that I was afflicted; but time is necessary to work us to this persuasion, and in due time it

shall be yours. Mr. Hayley, who tenderly sympathise with you, has enjoined me to send you as pressing a invitation as I can frame, to join me at this place. have every motive to wish your consent; both you benefit and my own, which, I believe, would be abun dantly answered by your coming, ought to make m eloquent in such a cause. Here you will find silenc and retirement in perfection, when you would seek them, and here such company as, I have no doubt would suit you; all cheerful, but not noisy; and al alike disposed to love you. You and I seem to have here a fair opportunity of meeting. It were a pity we should be in the same county and not come together. I am here till the seventeenth of September, an interval that will afford you time to make the necessary arrngements, and to gratify me at last with an interview, which I have long desired. Let me hear from you soon, that I may have double pleasure, the pleasure of expecting, as well as the pleasure of seing you.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, though still a sufferer by her last illness, is much better, and has received considerable benefit by the air of Eartham. She adds to mine her affectionate compliments, and joins me and Hayley in this invitation.

Mr. Romney is here, and a young man a cousin of mine. I tell you who we are, that you may not be afraid of us.

Adieu—May the Comforter of all the afflicted who seek him be yours. God bless you.

W. C.

LETTER XLI.
To Lady HESKETH.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

I know not how it is, my dearest coz. but in a new scene, and surrounded by strange objects, I find my powers of thinking dissipated to a degree that makes it difficult to me even to write a letter, and even a letter to you; but such a letter as I can, I will, and have the fairest chance to succeed this morning; Hayley, and Romney, and Hayley's son, and Beau, being all gone together to the sea for bathing. The sea, you must know, is nine miles off; so that unless stupidity prevent, I shall have opportunity to write not only to you, but to poor Hurdis also, who is broken-hearted for the loss of his favourite sister, lately dead; and whose letter, giving an account of it, which I received yesterday, drew tears from the eyes of all our party. My only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure me that you are in a state of recovery; otherwise I should mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his: for though nature designed you only for my cousin, you have had a sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that having no sister, the daughter of my own mother, I thought it proper to have one, the daughter of yours. Certain it is that I can by no means afford to lose you, and that unless you will be upon honour with me, to give always a true account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them; and if increase of appetite, and a double portion of sleep, be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here, and could I be translated to paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently the better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack; still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support in walking: but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step. God knows what he designs for me, but when I see those who are dearer to me than myself distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before me, indeed, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this.

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and in the opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the most exact resemblance possible.

The seventeenth of September is the day on which I intend to leave Eartham. We shall then have been six weeks resident here; a holiday time long enough for a man who has much to do. And now farewell.

W. C.

P. S. Hayley, whose love for me seems to be truly that of a brother, has given me his picture, drawn by Romney about fifteen years ago; an admirable likeness.

LETTER XLII.
To Lady HESKETH.

Eartham, Sept. 9, 1792.

MY DEAREST COZ.

I determine, if possible, to send you one more letter, or, at least, something like one, before we leave Eartham. But I am, in truth, so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could leap well no where but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld, nor expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better; it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels itself peculiarly gratified: whereas, here I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like mountains, a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place can avail me little. Accordingly, I have not looked out for a house in Sussex, nor shall.

The intended day of our departure continues to be the seventeenth. I hope to re-conduct Mrs. Unwin to the Lodge with her health considerably mended; but it is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand still fail her, so that she can neither read nor work: mortifying circumstances both, to her, who is never willingly idle.

On the eighteenth I propose to dine with the General, and to rest that night at Kingston. But the plea-

sure I shall have in the interview will hardly be greater than the pain I shall feel at the end of it, for we shall part probably to meet no more.

Johnny, I know, has told you that Mr. Hurdis is here. Distressed by the loss of his sister, he has renounced the place where she died for ever, and is about to enter on a new course of life at Oxford. You would admire him much. He is gentle in his manners, and delicate in his person, resembling our poor friend Unwin, both in face and figure, more than any one I have ever seen. But he has not, at least he has not at present, his vivacity.

I have corresponded since I came here with Mrs. Courteney, and had yesterday a very kind letter from her.

Adieu, my dear; may God bless you. Write to me as soon as you can after the twentieth; I shall then be at Weston, and indulging myself in the hope that I shall ere long see you there also.

W. C.

The reader will perceive from the last letter, that Cowper, amused as he was with the scenery of Sussex, began to feel the powerful attraction of home. Indeed, the infirm state of Mrs. Unwin, and the declining season of the year, rendered it highly desirable for the tender travellers to be restored to their own fire-side by the time they proposed.

Their departure from Eartham was a scene of affectionate anxiety; and a perfect contrast to the gaiety of their arrival. The kindness of Cowper relieved my solicitude concerning their journey, by the following letter from Kingston. I insert it as a pleasing memorial

of that peculiar tenderness of heart, which conspired with his most admirable talents to render him the most interesting of men. From an ardent, and, I hope, a laudable desire to display this endearing characteristic of my friend, I shall add a collection of extracts from his letters to me, rather more copious than I at first intended.

LETTER XLIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

The Sun, at Kingston, Sept. 18, 1792.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

With no sinister accident to retard or terrify us, we find ourselves, at a quarter before one, arrived safe at Kingston. I left you with a heavy heart, and with a heavy heart took leave of our dear Tom, at the bottom of the Chalk-hill. But soon after this last separation, my troubles gushed from my eyes, and then I was better.

We must now prepare for our visit to the General. I add no more, therefore, than our dearest remembrances and prayers that God may bless you and yours, and reward you an hundred-fold for all your kindness. Tell Tom I shall always hold him dear for his affectionate attentions to Mrs. Unwin. From her heart the memory of him can never be erased. Johnny loves you all, and has his share in all these acknowledgments. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER XLIV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Sept. 21, 17

MY DEAR HAYLEY,

Chaos himself, even the ch of Milton, is not surrounded with more confusion, has a mind more completely in a hubbub than I ex rience at the present moment. At our first arri after a long absence, we find a hundred orders to s vants necessary, a thousand things to be restored their proper places, and an endless variety of minu to be adjusted; which, though individually of little portance, are most momentous in the aggregate. these circumstances I find myself so indisposed to v ting, that, save to yourself, I would on no account tempt it; but to you I will give such a recital as I c of all that has passed since I sent you that short r from Kingston; knowing that if it be a perplexed r tal, you will consider the cause, and pardon it. I begin with a remark, in which I am inclined to th you will agree with me, that there is sometimes n true heroism passing in a corner, and on occasions make no noise in the world, than has often been e: cised by those whom that world esteems her grea heroes, and on occasions the most illustrious; I h so at least, for all the heroism I have to boast, and the opportunities I have of displaying any, are of a vate nature. After writing the note I immediately gan to prepare for my appointed visit to Ham; but struggles that I had with my own spirit, labouring did under the most dreadful dejection, are never t told. I would have given the world to have been cused. I went, however, and carried my point ag myself with a heart riven asunder. I have reason

all this anxiety, which I cannot relate now. The visit, however, passed off well, and we returned in the dark to Kingston. I, with a lighter heart than I had known since my departure from Eartham, and Mary too, for she had suffered hardly less than myself, and chiefly on my account. That night we rested well in our inn, and at twenty minutes after eight next morning set off for London; exactly at ten we reached Mr. Rose's door: we drank a dish of chocolate with him, and proceeded, Mr. Rose riding with us as far as St. Alban's. From this time we met with no impediment. In the dark, and in a storm, at eight at night we found ourselves at our own back door. Mrs. Unwin was very near slipping out of the chair in which she was taken from the chaise, but at last we landed safe. We all have had a good night, and are all well this morning. God bless you my dearest brother.

W. C.

LETTER XLV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Oct. 2, 1792.

MY DEAR HAYLEY,

A bad night, succeeded by an east wind, and a sky all in sables, have such an effect on my spirits, that, if I did not consult my own comfort more than yours, I should not write to-day, for I shall not entertain you much. Yet your letter, though containing no very pleasant tidings, has afforded me some relief. It tells me, indeed, that you have been dispirited yourself, and that poor little Tom, the faithful squire of my Mary, has been seriously indisposed. All this grieves me; but then there is a warmth of heart

and a kindness in it that do me good. I will endeavour not to repay you in notes of sorrow and despondence though all my sprightly chords seem broken. In truth, one day excepted, I have not seen the day when I have been cheerful since I left you. My spirits, I think, are almost constantly lower than they were: the approach of winter is, perhaps, the cause, and if it is, I have nothing better to expect for a long time to come.

Yesterday was a day of assignation with myself, the day of which I said some days before it came, when that day comes I will begin my dissertations. Accordingly, when it came I prepared to do so; filled a letter-case with fresh paper, furnished myself with a pretty good pen, and replenished my ink-bottle: but partly from one cause and partly from another, chiefly, however, from distress and dejection, after writing and obliterating about six lines, in the composition of which I spent near an hour, I was obliged to relinquish the attempt. An attempt so unsuccessful could have no other effect than to dishearten me, and it has had that effect to such a degree, that I know not when I shall find courage to make another. At present I shall certainly abstain, since, at present, I cannot well afford to expose myself to the danger of a fresh mortification.

W. C.

LETTER XLVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Oct. 13, 1792

I began a letter to you yesterday my dearest brother, and proceeded through two sides of the sheet; but so much of my nervous fever found its way into it, that looking it over this morning, I determined *not* to send it.

I have risen, though not in good spirits, yet in better than I generally do of late, and therefore will not address you in the melancholy tone that belongs to my worst feelings.

I began to be restless about your portrait, and to say, how long shall I have to wait for it? I wished it here for many reasons: the sight of it will be a comfort to me, for I not only love, but am proud of you, as of a conquest made in my old age. Johnny goes to town on Monday, on purpose to call on Romney, to whom he shall give all proper information concerning its conveyance hither. The name of a man whom I esteem as I do Romney, ought not to be unmusical in my ears, but his name will be so till I have paid him a debt justly due to him, by doing such poetical honours to it as I intend. Heaven knows when that intention will be executed, for the muse is still as obdurate and as coy as ever.

Your kind postscript is just arrived, and gives me great pleasure. When I cannot see you myself, it seems some comfort, however, that you have been seen by another known to me, and who will tell me, in a few days, that he has seen you. Your wishes to disperse my melancholy would, I am sure, prevail, did that event depend on the warmth and sincerity with which you frame them; but it has baffled both wishes and prayers, and those the most fervent that could be made, so many years, that the case seems hopeless. But no more of this at present.

Your verses to Austin are as sweet as the honey that they accompany; kind, friendly, witty, and elegant; when shall I be able to do the like! Perhaps when my Mary, like your little Tom, shall cease to be an invalid, I may recover a power, at least, to do something.

I sincerely rejoice in the dear little man's restoration. My Mary continues, I hope, to mend a little.

W. C.

LETTER XLVII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

Weston, Oct. 19, 1792.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

You are too useful when you are here not to be missed on a hundred occasions daily, and too much domesticated with us not to be regretted always. I hope, therefore, that your month or six weeks will not be like many that I have known, capable of being drawn out into any length whatever, and productive of nothing but disappointment.

I have done nothing since you went, except that I have composed the better half of a sonnet to Romney; yet even this ought to bear an earlier date, for I began to be haunted with a desire to do it long before we came out of Sussex, and have daily attempted it ever since.

It would be well for the reading part of the world, if the writing part were, many of them, as dull as I am. Yet even this small produce, which my sterile intellect has hardly yielded at last, may serve to convince you that in point of spirits I am not worse. In fact, I am a little better. The powders and the laudanum together have, for the present at least, abated the fever that consumes them; and in measure as the fever abates, I acquire a less discouraging view of things, and with it a little power to exert myself.

In the evenings I read Baker's Chronicle to Mrs. Unwin, having no other history, and hope in time to

be as well versed in it, as his admirer Sir Roger de Coverly.

W. C.

LETTER XLVIII.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

Weston, Oct. 22, 1792.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

Here am I with I know not how many letters to answer, and no time to do it in. I exhort you, therefore, to set a proper value on this, as proving your priority in my attentions, though, in other respects, likely to be of little value.

You do well to sit for your picture, and give very sufficient reasons for doing it. You will also, I doubt not, take care that when future generations shall look at it, some spectator or other shall say, this is the picture of a good man, and a useful one.

And now God bless you, my dear Johnny. I proceed pretty much at the old rate; rising cheerless and distressed in the morning, and brightening a little as the day goes on. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER XLIX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, October 28, 1792.

Nothing done, my dearest brother, nor likely to be done at present; yet I purpose, in a day or two, to make another attempt, to which, however, I shall address myself with fear and trem-

bling, like a man who, having sprained his wrist, dreads to use it. I have not, indeed, like such a man, injured myself by any extraordinary exertion, but seem as much enfeebled as if I had. The consciousness that there is so much to do, and nothing done, is a burthen that I am not able to bear. Milton, especially, is my grievance, and I might almost as well be haunted by his ghost, as goaded with such continual reproaches for neglecting him: I will therefore begin; I will do my best; and if, after all, that best prove good for nothing, I will even send the notes, worthless as they are, that I have made already; a measure very disagreeable to myself, and to which nothing but necessity shall compel me. I shall rejoice to see those new samples of your biography which you give me to expect.

Allons! courage!—Here comes something, however, produced after a gestation as long as that of a pregnant woman. It is the debt long unpaid; the compliment due to Romney; and if it has your approbation, I will send it, or you may send it for me. I must premise, however, that I intended nothing less than a sonnet when I began. I know not why, but I said to myself, it shall not be a sonnet: accordingly I attempted it in one sort of measure, then in a second, then in a third, till I had made the trial in half a dozen different kinds of shorter verse, and behold it is a sonnet at last. The fates would have it so.

To GEORGE ROMNEY, Esquire.

Romney! expert infallible to trace,
On chart or canvass, not the form alone,
And 'semblance, but, however faintly shown,
The mind's impression too on every face:

With strokes that time ought never to erase,
Thou hast so pencil'd mine, that though I own
The subject worthless, I have never known
The artist shining with superior grace.

But this I mark, that symptoms none of woe
In thy incomparable work appear:
Well, I am satisfied it should be so,
Since, on maturer thought, the cause is clear;

For in my looks, what sorrow could'st thou see,
While I was Hayley's guest, and sat to thee?

LETTER L.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

Weston, Nov. 9, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I wish that I were as industrious, and as much occupied as you, though in a different way; but it is not so with me. Mrs. Unwin's great debility (who is not yet able to move without assistance) is of itself a hinderance such as would effectually disable me. Till she can work and read, and fill up her time as usual, (all which is at present entirely out of her power) I may now and then find time to write a letter, but I shall write nothing more. I cannot sit with my pen in my hand, and my books before me, while she is, in effect, in solitude, silent and looking at the fire. To this hinderance that other has been added, of which you are already aware, a want of spirits, such I have never known, when I was not absolutely laid by, since I commenced an author. How long I shall be continued in these uncomfortable circum-

stances is known only to Him, who, as he will, disposes of us all. I may yet be able, perhaps, to prepare the first book of the Paradise Lost for the press before it will be wanted; and Johnson himself seems to think there will be no haste for the second. But poetry is my favourite employment, and all my poetical operations are, in the mean time, suspended; for while a work to which I have bound myself remains unaccomplished, I can do nothing else.

Johnson's plan of prefixing my phiz to the new edition of my poems is by no means a pleasant one to me; and so I told him in a letter which I sent him from Eartham, in which I assured him that my objections to it would not be easily surmounted. But if you judge that it may really have an effect in advancing the sale, I would not be so squeamish as to suffer the spirit of prudery to prevail in me to his disadvantage. Somebody told an author, I forget whom, that there was more vanity in refusing his picture than in granting it, on which he instantly complied. I do not perfectly feel all the force of the argument, but it shall content me that he did.

I do most sincerely rejoice in the success of your publication, and have no doubt that my prophecy concerning your success in greater matters will be fulfilled. We are naturally pleased when our friends approve what we approve ourselves; how much then must I be pleased when you speak so kindly of Johnny! I know him to be all that you think him, and love him entirely.

Adieu. We expect you at Christmas, and shall therefore rejoice when Christmas comes. Let nothing interfere.

Ever yours, W. C.

LETTER LI.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

Weston, Nov. 20, 1792.

DEAREST JOHNNY,

I give you many thanks for r rhymes, and for your verses without rhyme; for r poetical dialogue between wood and stone; be- en Homer's head and the head of Samuel; kindly nded, I know well, for my amusement, and that used me much.

The successor of the clerk defunct, for whom I used vrite mortuary verses, arrived here this morning, h a recommendatory letter from Joe Rye, and an able petition of his own, intreating me to assist him had assisted his predecessor. I have undertaken service, although with no little reluctance, being olved in many arrears on other subjects, and having y little dependance at present on my ability to write ill. I proceed exactly as when you were here—a er now and then before breakfast, and the rest of time all holiday; if holiday it may be called, that pent chiefly in moping and musing, and "*forecast- the fashion of uncertain evils.*"

The fever of my spirits has harassed me much, and ave never had so good a night nor so quiet a rising, e you went, as on this very morning—a relief that count particularly seasonable and propitious; be- se I had, in my intentions, devoted this morning to , and could not have fulfilled those intentions had I n as spiritless as I generally am.

am glad that Johnson is in no haste for Milton, for em myself not likely to address myself presently to concern, with any prospect of success; yet some-

thing now and then, like a secret whisper, encou
and assures me that it will yet be done.

W.

LETTER LII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Nov. 22,

How shall I thank you en
for the interest you take in my future Miltonic lab
and the assistance you promise me in the perform
of them? I will some time or other, if I live, and
a poet, acknowledge your friendship in some o
best verse; the most suitable return one poet can
to another: in the mean time I love you, and am
sible of all your kindness. You wish me warm i
work, and I ardently wish the same; but when I
be so, God only knows. My melancholy, w
seemed a little alleviated for a few days, has gath
about me again, with as black a cloud as ever:
consequence is absolute incapacity to begin.

I was for some years Dirge-writer to the to
Northampton, being employed by the clerk of the
cipal parish there to furnish him with an annual
of verses proper to be printed at the foot of his b
mortality. But the clerk died, and hearing nothin
two years from his successor, I well hoped that
out of my office. The other morning, however,
announced the new clerk: he came to solicit the
service as I had rendered to his predecessor, and
luctantly complied; doubtful, indeed, whether I
capable. I have, however, achieved that labour;
I have done nothing more.—I am just sent for
Mary, dear Mary! Adieu. She is as well as w

left you—I would I could say better. Remember us us both affectionately to your sweet boy, and trust me for being most truly yours, W. C.

LETTER LIII.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

Weston, Dec. 16, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

We differ so little that it is pity we should not agree. The possibility of restoring our diseased Government is, I think, the only point on which we are not of one mind. If you are right, and it cannot be touched in the medical way without danger of absolute ruin to the Constitution, keep the Doctors at a distance, say I—and let us live as long as we can. But perhaps physicians might be found of skill sufficient for the purpose, were they but as willing as able. Who are they? Not those honest blunderers the mob, but our governors themselves. As it is in the power of any individual to be honest if he will, any body of men are, as it seems to me, equally possessed of the same option. For I can never persuade myself to think the world so constituted by the Author of it, and human society, which is his ordinance, so shabby a business, that the buying and selling of votes and consciences should be essential to its existence. As to multiplied representation, I know not that I foresee any great advantage likely to arise from that. Provided there be but a reasonable number of reasonable heads laid together for the good of the nation, the end may as well be answered by five hundred as it would be by a thousand, and perhaps better. But then they should be honest as well as wise; and in order that they may be so, they should put it out of their own power to be otherwise.

This they might certainly do if they would, and would they do it, I am not convinced that any great mischief would ensue. You say, "somebody must have influence;" but I see no necessity for it. Let integrity of intention and a due share of ability be supposed, and the influence will be in its right place; it will all centre in the zeal and good of the nation. That will influence their debates and decisions, and nothing else ought to do it. You will say, perhaps, that wise men, and honest men, as they are supposed, are yet liable to be split into almost as many differences of opinion as there are individuals; but I rather think not. It is observed of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, that each always approved and seconded the plans and views of the other; and the reason given for it is, that they were men of equal ability. The same cause that could make two unanimous would make twenty so, and would at least secure a majority among as many hundreds.

As to the reformation of the church, I want none, unless by a better provision for the inferior clergy; and if that could be brought about by emaciating a little some of our too corpulent dignitaries, I should be well contented.

The dissenters, I think, catholics and others, have all a right to the privileges of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution, and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is an abomination. But, after all, *Valeat Respublica;* I love my country, I love my king, and I wish peace and prosperity to Old England. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LIV.
To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Dec. 26, 1792.

That I may not be silent till my silence alarms you, I snatch a moment to tell you that, although *toujours triste*, I am not worse than usual; but my opportunities of writing are *paucified*, as perhaps Dr. Johnson would have dared to say, and the few that I have are shortened by company.

Give my love to dear Tom, and thank him for his very apposite extract, which I should be happy, indeed, to turn to any account. How often do I wish, in the course of every day, that I could be employed once more in poetry; and how often, of course, that this Miltonic trap had never caught me! The year ninety-two shall stand chronicled in my remembrance as the most melancholy that I have ever known, except the weeks that I spent at Eartham; and such it has been principally, because being engaged to Milton, I felt myself no longer free for any other engagement. That ill-fated work, impracticable in itself, has made every thing else impracticable.

* * * * I am very Pindaric, and obliged to be so by the hurry of the hour. My friends are come down to breakfast. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LV.
To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Jan. 23, 1793.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

Now I know that you are safe, I treat you, as you see, with a philosophical in-

difference, not acknowledging your kind and immediate answer to anxious enquiries, till it suits my own convenience. I have learned, however, from my late solicitude, that not only you, but yours, interest me to a degree that, should any thing happen to either of you, would be very inconsistent with my peace. Sometimes I thought that you were extremely ill, and once or twice I thought you were dead. As often some tragedy reached my ears concerning little Tom. "Oh *vana mentes hominum!*" How liable are we to a thousand impositions, and how indebted to honest old Time, who never fails to undeceive us! Whatever you had in prospect, you acted kindly by me not to make me a partaker of your expectations; for I have a spirit, if not so sanguine as yours, yet that would have waited for your coming with anxious impatience, and have been dismally mortified by the disappointment. Had you come, and come without notice too, you would not have surprised us more than (as the matter was managed) we were surprised at the arrival of your picture. It reached us in the evening, after the shutters were closed, at a time when a chaise might actually have brought you without giving us the least previous intimation. Then it was that Samuel, with his cheerful countenance, appeared at the study door, and with a voice as cheerful as his looks, exclaimed, "Mr. Hayley is come, Madam!" We both started, and in the same moment cried, "Mr. Hayley come! And where is he?" The next moment corrected our mistake, and finding Mary's voice grow suddenly tremulous, I turned, and saw her weeping.

I do nothing, notwithstanding all your exhortations: my idleness is proof against them all, or, to speak truly, my difficulties are so. Something indeed I do. I play at push-pin with Homer every morning before breakfast, fingering and polishing, as Paris did his ar-

mour. I have lately had a letter from Dublin on that subject, which has pleased me.

W. C.

LETTER LVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Jan. 29, 1793.

MY DEAREST HAYLEY,

I truly sympathize with you under your weight of sorrow for the loss of our good Samaritan. But be not broken-hearted, my friend! Remember, the loss of those we love is the condition on which we live ourselves; and that he who chooses his friends wisely from among the excellent of the earth, has a sure ground to hope, concerning them, when they die, that a merciful God has made them far happier than they could be here; and that we shall join them soon again. This is solid comfort, could we but avail ourselves of it; but I confess the difficulty of doing so. Sorrow is like the deaf adder, "that hears not the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely;" and I feel so much myself for the death of Austin, that my own chief consolation is, that I had never seen him. Live yourself, I beseech you, for I have seen so much of you, that I can by no means spare you; and I will live as long as it shall please God to permit me: I know you set some value on me, therefore let that promise comfort you; and give us not reason to say, like David's servants,—"We know that it would have pleased thee more if all we had died, than this one, for whom thou art inconsolable." You have still Romney, and Carwardine, and Guy, and me, my poor Mary, and I

know not how many beside; as many, I suppose, as ever had an opportunity of spending a day with you. He who has the most friends must necessarily lose the most, and he whose friends are numerous as yours, may the better spare a part of them. It is a changing, transient scene: yet a little while and this poor dream of life will be over with all of us. The living, and they who live unhappy—they are indeed subjects of sorrow. Adieu, my beloved friend. Ever yours.

W. C.

LETTER LVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

Weston, Feb. 5, 1793.

In this last revisal of my work (the Homer) I have made a number of small improvements, and am now more convinced than ever, having exercised a cooler judgment upon it than before I could, that the translation will make its way. There must be time for the conquest of vehement and long-rooted prejudice; but without much self-partiality, I believe that the conquest will be made, and am certain that I should be of the same opinion, were the work another man's. I shall soon have finished the Odyssey, and when I have, will send the corrected copy of both to Johnson. Adieu. W. C.

LETTER LVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

Weston, Feb. 10, 1793.

My pens are all split, and my ink-glass is dry;
Neither wit, common sense, nor ideas have I.

In vain has it been that I have made several attempts to write since I left Sussex: unless more comfortable days arrive than I have the confidence to look for, there is an end of all writing with me. I have no spirits. When the Rose came, I was obliged to prepare for his coming by a nightly dose of laudanum—twelve drops suffice; but without them I am devoured by melancholy.

Apropos of the Rose! His wife, in her political notions, is the exact counterpart of yourself—loyal in the extreme. Therefore, if you find her thus inclined, when you become acquainted with her, you must not place her resemblance of yourself to the account of her admiration of you, for she is your likeness ready made. In fact, we are all of one mind about government matters, and notwithstanding your opinion, the Rose himself is a whig, and I am a whig, and you, my dear, are a tory, and all the tories now-a-days call all the whigs republicans. How the deuce you came to be a tory is best known to yourself: you have to answer for this novelty to the shades of your ancestors, who were always whigs ever since we had any. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

Feb. 17, 1793.

I have read the critique on my work in the Analytical Review, and am happy to have fallen into the hands of a critic, rigorous enough indeed, but a scholar, and a man of sense, and who does not deliberately intend me mischief. I am better pleased, indeed, that he censures some things, than I should have been with unmixt commendation; for his censure (to use the new diplomatic term) will accredit his praises. In his particular remarks he is for the most part right, and I shall be the better for them; but in his general ones I think he asserts too largely, and more than he could prove. With respect to inversions in particular, I know that they do not abound. Once they did, and I had Milton's example for it, not disapproved by Addison. But on ———'s remonstrance against them, I expunged the most, and in my new edition shall have fewer still. I know that they give dignity, and am sorry to part with them; but, to parody an old proverb, he who lives in the year ninety-three, must do as in the year ninety-three is done by others. The same remark I have to make on his censure of inharmonious lines. I know them to be much fewer than he asserts, and not more in number than I accounted indispensibly necessary to a due variation of cadence. I have, however, now, in comformity with modern taste (over-much delicate in my mind) given to the far greater number of them a flow as smooth as oil. A few I retain, and will, in compliment to my own judgment. He thinks me too faithful to compound epithets in the introductory lines, and I know his reason. He fears lest the English reader should blame Homer,

whom he idolizes, though hardly more than I, for such constant repetition. But them I shall not alter. They are necessary to a just representation of the original. In the affair of Outis, I shall throw him flat on his back, by an unanswerable argument, which I shall give in a note, and with which I am furnished by Mrs. Unwin. So much for hypercriticism, which has run away with all my paper. This critic, by the way, is ———— : I know him by infallible indications.

W. C.

LETTER LX.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

Weston, Feb. 23, 1793.

My eyes, which have long been much inflamed, will hardly serve me for Homer, and oblige me to make all my letters short. You have obliged me much, by sending me so speedily the remainder of your notes. I have begun with them again, and find them, as before, very much to the purpose. More to the purpose they could not have been, had you been poetry professor already. I rejoice sincerely in the prospect you have of that office, which, whatever may be your own thoughts of the matter, I am sure you will fill with great sufficiency. Would that my interest and power to serve you were greater! One string to my bow I have, and one only, which shall not be idle for want of my exertions. I thank you, likewise, for your very entertaining notices and remarks in the natural way. The hurry in which I write would not suffer me to send you many in return, had I many to send, but only two or three present themselves.

Frogs will feed on worms. I saw a frog gathering into his gullet an earth-worm as long as himself: it cost him time and labour, but at last he succeeded.

Mrs. Unwin and I, crossing a brook, saw from the foot-bridge somewhat at the bottom of the water, which had the appearance of a flower. Observing attentively, we found that it consisted of a circular assemblage of minnows; their heads all met in a centre, and their tails diverging at equal distances, and being elevated above their heads, gave them the appearance of a flower half blown. One was longer than the rest, and as often as a straggler came in sight, he quitted his place to pursue him, and having driven him away, he returned to it again, no other minnow offering to take it in his absence. This we saw him do several times. The object that had attached them all was a dead minnow, which they seemed to be devouring.

After a very rainy day, I saw on one of the flower borders what seemed a long hair, but it had a waving twining motion. Considering more nearly, I found it alive, and endued with spontaneity, but could not discover at the ends of it either head or tail, or any distinction of parts. I carried it into the house, when the air of a warm room dried and killed it presently.

W. C.

LETTER LXI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, Feb. 24, 1793.

Your letter, so full of kindness, and so exactly in unison with my own feelings for you, should have had, as it deserved to have, an earlier answer, had I not been perpetually tormented with in-

flamed eyes, which are a sad hinderance to me in every thing. But, to make amends, if I do not send you an early answer, I send you at least a speedy one, being obliged to write as fast as my pen can trot, that I may shorten the time of poring upon paper as much as possible. Homer, too, has been another hinderance, for always when I can see, which is only during about two hours in a morning, and not at all by candle light, I devote myself to him, being in haste to send him a second time to the press, that nothing may stand in the way of Milton. By the way, where are my dear Tom's remarks, which I long to have, and must have soon, or they will come too late?

Oh you rogue, what would you give to have such a dream about Milton, as I had about a week since? I dreamed that, being in a house in the city, and with much company, looking towards the lower end of the room from the upper end of it, I descried a figure, which I immediately knew to be Milton's. He was very gravely, but very neatly attired in the fashion of his day, and had a countenance which filled me with those feelings that an affectionate child has for a beloved father; such, for instance, as Tom has for you. My first thought was wonder, where he could have been concealed so many years: my second, a transport of joy to find him still alive: my third, another transport to find myself in his company; and my fourth, a resolution to accost him: I did so, and he received me with a complacence, in which I saw equal sweetness and dignity. I spoke of his Paradise Lost, as every man must who is worthy to speak of it at all, and told him a long story of the manner in which it affected me, when I first discovered it, being at that time a schoolboy. He answered me by a smile, and a gentle inclination of his head. He then grasped my hand affec-

tionately, and with a smile that charmed me, "well, you for your part will do well also." A recollecting his great age, (for I understood him two hundred years old) I feared that I might fa him by much talking. I took my leave, and he his with an air of the most perfect good breeding. person, his features, his manner, were all so per characteristic, that I am persuaded an apparit him could not represent him more completely. may be said to have been one of the dreams of Pi may it not?

How truly I rejoice that you have recovered that man won my heart the moment I saw him: my love to him, and tell him I am truly glad alive again.

There is much sweetness in those lines fron Sonneteer of Avon, and not a little in dear Tom's earnest, I trust, of good things to come.

With Mary's kind love, I must now conclude m my dear brother, ever yours, LIPPU

LETTER LXII.

To Mr. THOMAS HAYLEY.

Weston, March 14,

MY DEAR LITTLE CRITIC,

I thank you hearti your observations, on which I set a higher value cause they have instructed me as much, and have tertained me more, than all the other strictures o public judges in these matters. Perhaps I ar much more pleased with *shameless wolf*, &c. th But what is to be done, my little man? Coarse ar pressions are, they are no more than equivalent

of Homer. The invective of the ancients was never tempered with good manners, as your papa can tell you; and my business, you know, is not to be more polite than my author, but to represent him as closely as I can.

Dishonour'd foul I have wiped away, for the reason you give, which is a very just one, and the present reading is this:

> Who had dared dishonour thus
> The life itself, &c.

Your objection to *kindler of the fires of heaven* I had the good fortune to anticipate, and expunged the dirty ambiguity some time since, wondering not a little that I had ever admitted it.

The fault you find with the two first verses of Nestor's speech discovers such a degree of just discernment, that but for your papa's assurance to the contrary, I must have suspected *him* as the author of that remark. Much as I should have respected it, if it had been so, I value it, I assure you, my little friend, still more as yours. In the new edition, the passage will be found thus altered;

> Alas! great sorrow falls on Greece to-day.
> Priam, and Priam's sons, with all in Troy—
> Oh! how will they exult, and in their hearts
> Triumph, once hearing of this broil between
> The prime of Greece, in council, and in arms!

Where the word *reel* suggests to you the idea of a drunken mountain, it performs the service to which I destined it. It is a bold metaphor; but justified by one of the sublimest passages in scripture, compared with

the sublimity of which even that of Homer suffers humiliation.

It is God himself, who speaking, I think, by the prophet Isaiah, says,

"The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard."

With equal boldness in the same scripture, the poetry of which was never equalled, mountains are said to skip, to break out into singing, and the fields to clap their hands. I intend, therefore, that my Olympus shall be still tipsy.

The accuracy of your last remark, in which you convicted me of a bull, delights me. A fig for all critics but you! The blockheads could not find it. It shall stand thus:

First spake Polydamas——

Homer was more upon his guard than to commit such a blunder, for he says,

ἦρχ' ἀγορεύειν.

And now, my dear little censor, once more accept my thanks. I only regret that your strictures are so few, being just and sensible as they are.

Tell your papa he shall hear from me soon: accept mine, and my dear invalid's affectionate remembrances. Ever yours, W. C.*

* *Note by the Editor.*—This letter may be regarded as a remarkable proof of the great poet's indulgent sweetness of temper, in favouring the literary talents of a child. A good-natured reader will hardly blame

LETTER LXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, March 19, 1793.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I am so busy every morning before breakfast (my only opportunity) stalking and strutting in Homeric stilts, that you ought to account it an instance of marvellous grace and favour that I condescend to write even to you. Sometimes I am seriously almost crazed with the multiplicity of matters before me, and the little or no time that I have for them; and sometimes I repose myself, after the fatigue

parental partiality to a dear departed scholar, which induces me to insert in this note the letter Cowper answered so kindly—a letter that readers, accustomed to contemplate the compositions of childhood, may consider, perhaps, as a curiosity, when they are assured, as they are with perfect truth, that every syllable of the letter, and of the criticisms annexed to it, were the voluntary and uncorrected production of a boy whose age was little more than twelve years.

To WILLIAM COWPER, Esquire.

Eartham, March 4, 1793.

Honoured King of Bards!

Since you deign to demand the observations of an humble and unexperienced servant of yours, on a work of one who is so much his superior, (as he is ever ready to serve you with all his might) behold what you demand! But let me desire you not to censure me for my unskilful, and, perhaps, (as they undoubtedly will appear to you) ridiculous observations; but be so kind as to receive them as a

of that distraction, on the pillow of despair; a pillow which has often served me in time of need, and is become, by frequent use, if not very comfortable, at least convenient. So reposed, I laugh at the world and say, "yes, you may gape and expect both Homer and Milton from me, but I'll be hanged if you ever get them."

In Homer you must know I am advanced as far as the fifteenth book of the Iliad, leaving nothing behind me that can reasonably offend the most fastidious; and I design him for public appearance in his new dress as soon as possible, for a reason which any poet may guess, if he will but thrust his hand into his pocket.

mark of respectful affection from your obedient servant,

THOMAS HAYLEY.

Book.	Line.	
i.	184	——I cannot reconcile myself to these expressions, viz. "Ah, cloth'd with im-
	195	pudence," &c. and "shameless wolf," and (196) "face of flint."
i.	508	——"Dishonour'd foul" is, in my opinion, an uncleanly expression.
i.	651	——"Reel'd," I think, makes it appear as if Olympus was drunk.
i.	749	——"Kindler of the fires in heaven," I think, makes Jupiter appear too much like a lamp-lighter.
ii.	317 to 319	—These lines are, in my opinion, below the elevated genius of Mr. Cowper.
xviii.	300 to 304	—This appears to me rather Irish, since in line 300 you say "no one sat," and in line 304, "Polydamas rose."

'ou forbid me to tantalize you with an invitation to :ston, and yet invite me to Eartham. No, no; re is no such happiness in store for me at present. l I rambled at all, I was under promise to all my r mother's kindred to go to Norfolk, and they are ıg to see me: but I have told them that die they ıt, for I cannot go; and ergo, as you will perceive, go no where else.

'hanks for Mazarine's epitaph: it is full of witty ıdox, and is written with a force and severity which ciently bespeak the author. I account it as a cu- ity, and shall be happy, when time shall serve, ı your aid, to make a good translation of it. But will be a stubborn business. Adieu. The clock ces eight—And now for Homer.

W. C.

LETTER LXIV.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

The Lodge, March 27, 1793.

DEAR FRIEND,

I must send you a [illegible] con- ulation on the event of your transaction with John- since you, I know, partake with me in the pleasure ceive from it. Few of my concerns have been so pily concluded. I am now satisfied with my book- :r, as I have substantial cause to be, and account :elf in good hands; a circumstance as pleasant to as any other part of the business; for I love dear-) be able to confide, with all my heart, in those ı whom I am connected, of what kind soever the nection may be.

The question of printing or not printing the alterations seems difficult to decide. If they are not printed, I shall, perhaps, disoblige some purchasers of the first edition; and if they are, many others of them, perhaps a great majority, will never care about them. As far as I have gone I have made a fair copy, and when I have finished the whole, will send them to Johnson, together with the interleaved volumes. He will see, in a few minutes, what it will be best to do, and by his judgment I shall be determined. The opinion to which I most incline is, that they ought to be printed separately, for they are many of them rather long, here and there a whole speech, or a whole simile; and the verbal and lineal variations are so numerous, that altogether, I apprehend, they will give a new air to the work, and, I hope, a much improved one.

I forgot to say in the proper place, that some notes, although but very few, I have added already, and may perhaps see here and there opportunity for a few more. But notes being little wanted, especially by people at all conversant with classical literature, as most readers of Homer are, I am persuaded that, were they numerous, they would be deemed an incumbrance. I shall write to Johnson soon, perhaps tomorrow, and then shall say the same thing to him.

In point of health we continue much the same. Our united love, and many thanks for your prosperous negociations, attend yourself and whole family, and especially my little name-sake. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LXV.

To JOHN JOHNSON, Esquire.

The Lodge, April 11, 1793.

DEAREST JOHNNY,

The long muster-roll of my
and small ancestors, I signed and dated, and sent
Mr. Bluemantle, on Monday, according to your
. Such a pompous affair, drawn out for my
reminds me of the old fable of the mountain in
rition and a mouse the produce. Rest undis-
d, say I, their lordly, ducal, and royal dust! Had
eft me something handsome, I should have re-
ed them more. But perhaps they did not know
uch a one as I should have the honour to be num-
among their descendants. Well, I have a little
eller that makes me some amends for their defi-
y. He has made me a present; an act of liberal-
hich I take every opportunity to blazon, as it well
ves. But you, I suppose, have learned it already
Mr. Rose.

ar not, my man. You will acquit yourself very
I dare say, both in standing for your degree, and
you have gained it. A little tremor, and a little
efacedness in a stripling, like you, are recom-
lations rather than otherwise; and so they ought
, being symptoms of an ingenuous mind, rather
quent in this age of brass.

hat you say of your determined purpose, with
s help, to take up the cross and despise the shame,
; us both real pleasure. In our pedigree is found
at least, who did it before you. Do you the like;
you will meet him in heaven, as sure as the scrip-
is the word of God.

The quarrel that the world has with evangelical men and doctrines, they would have with a host of angels in the human form; for it is the quarrel of owls with sunshine, of ignorance with divine illumination.

Adieu, my dear Johnny. We shall expect you with earnest desire at your coming, and receive you with much delight. W. C.

LETTER LXVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, April 23, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

Better late than never, and better a little than none at all! Had I been at liberty to consult my inclinations, I would have answered your truly kind and affectionate letter immediately. But I am the busiest man alive, and when this epistle is dispatched, you will be the only one of my correspondents to whom I shall not be indebted. While I write this, my poor Mary sits mute; which I cannot well bear, and which, together with want of time to write much, will have a curtailing effect on my epistle.

My only studying time is still given to Homer, not to correction and amendment of him, for that is all over, but to writing notes. Johnson has expressed a wish for some, that the unlearned may be a little illuminated concerning classical story and the mythology of the ancients; and his behaviour to me has been so liberal that I can refuse him nothing. Poking into the old Greek commentators blinds me. But it is no matter: I am the more like Homer.

Ever yours, my dearest Hayley, W. C.

LETTER LXVII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

May 5, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My delay to answer your last kind letter, to which likewise you desired a speedy reply, must have seemed rather difficult to explain on any other supposition than than that of illness. But illness has not been the cause, although, to say the truth, I cannot boast of having been lately very well. Yet has not this been the cause of my silence, but your own advice, very proper, and earnestly given to me, to proceed in the revisal of Homer. To this it is owing that, instead of giving an hour or two before breakfast to my correspondents, I allot that time entirely to my studies. I have nearly given the last touches to the poetry, and am now busied, far more laboriously, in writing notes at the request of my honest bookseller, transmitted to me in the first instance by you, and afterward repeated by himself. I am, therefore, deep in the old scholia, and have advanced to the latter part of Iliad nine, explaining, as I go, such passages as may be difficult to unlearned readers, and such only; for notes of that kind are the notes that Johnson desired. I find it a more laborious task than the translation was, and shall be heartily glad when it is over. In the mean time, all the letters I receive remain unanswered, or if they receive an answer, it is always a short one. Such this must be. Johnny is here, having flown over London.

Homer, I believe, will make a much more respectable appearance than before. Johnson now thinks it will be right to make a separate impression of the amendments.

W. C.

I breakfast every morning upon seven or eight pages of the Greek commentators: for so much I am obliged to read in order to select, perhaps, three or four short notes for the readers of my translation.

Homer is indeed a tie upon me that must not, on any account, be broken till all his demands are satisfied: though I have fancied, while the revisal of the Odyssey was at a distance, that it would ask less labour in the finishing, it is not unlikely that, when I take it actually in hand, I may find myself mistaken. Of this, at least, I am sure, that uneven verse abounds much more in it than it once did in the Iliad. Yet to the latter the critics objected on that account, though to the former never; perhaps because they had not read it. Hereafter they shall not quarrel with me on that score. The Iliad is now all smooth turnpike, and I will take equal care that there shall be no jolts in the Odyssey.

LETTER LXVIII.

To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 7, 1793.

MY DEAREST COZ.

You have thought me long silent, and so have many others. In fact, I have not for many months written punctually to any but yourself and Hayley. My time, the little I have, is so engrossed with Homer, that I have at this moment a bundle of unanswered letters by me, and letters likely to be so. Thou knowest, I dare say, what it is to have a head, weary with thinking. Mine is so fatigued by breakfast-time, three days out of four, I am utterly in-

capable of sitting down to my desk again for any purpose whatever.

I am glad I have convinced thee, at last, that thou art a tory. Your friend's definition of whig and tory may be just, for aught I know, as far as the latter are concerned; but, respecting the former I think him mistaken. There is no *true* whig who wishes all power in the hands of his own party. The division of it, which the lawyers call tripartite, is exactly what he desires; and he would have neither King, Lords nor Commons unequally trusted, or in the smallest degree predominant. Such a whig am I, and such whigs are the true friends of the constitution.

Adieu, my dear: I am dead with weariness.

W. C.

LETTER LXIX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

May 21, 1793.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

You must either think me extremely idle or extremely busy, that I have made your last very kind letter wait so long for an answer. The truth, however, is, that I am neither; but have had time enough to have scribbled to you, had I been able to scribble at all. To explain this riddle I must give you a short account of my proceedings.

I rise at six every morning, and fag till near eleven, when I breakfast. The consequence is, that I am so exhausted as not to be able to write when the opportunity offers. You will say, 'Breakfast before you work, and then your work will not fatigue you.' I answer, 'Perhaps I might, and your counsel would probably

prove beneficial; but I cannot spare a moment for eating in the early part of the morning, having no other time for study.' This uneasiness, of which I complain, is a proof that I am somewhat stricken in years; and there is no other cause by which I can account for it, since I go early to bed, always between ten and eleven, and seldom fail to sleep well. Certain it is, ten years since I could have done as much, and sixteen years ago did actually much more, without suffering fatigue or any inconvenience from my labours. How insensibly old age steals on, and how often it is actually arrived before we suspect it! Accident alone, some occurrence that suggests a comparison of our former with our present selves, affords the discovery. Well, it is always good to be undeceived, especially on an article of such importance.

There has been a book lately published, entitled, *Man as he is*. I have heard a high character of it, as admirably written, and am informed that, for that reason, and because it inculcates whig principles, it is by many imputed to you. I contradicted this report, assuring my informant that had it been yours I must have known it, for that you had bound yourself to make me your father-confessor on all such wicked occasions, and not to conceal from me even a murder, should you happen to commit one.

I will not trouble you at present to send me any more books with a view to my notes on Homer. I am not without hopes that Sir John Throckmorton, who is expected here from Venice in a short time, may bring me Villoison's edition of the Odyssey. He certainly will, if he found it published, and that alone will be *instar omnium*.

Adieu, my dearest brother. Give my love to Tom, and thank him for his book, of which I believe I need

not have deprived him, intending that my readers shall detect the occult instruction contained in Homer's stories for themselves.

W. C.

LETTER LXX.
To Lady HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 1, 1793.

MY DEAREST COZ.

You will not, you say, come to us now; and you tell us not when you will. These assignations *sine die* are such shadowy things, that I can neither grasp nor get any comfort from them. Know you not that hope is the next best thing to enjoyment? Give us, then, a hope, and a determinate time for that hope to fix on, and we will endeavour to be satisfied.

Johnny is gone to Cambridge, called thither to take his degree, and is much missed by me. He is such an active little fellow in my service that he cannot be otherwise. In three weeks, however, I shall hope to have him again for a fortnight. I have had a letter from him, containing an incident which has given birth to the following.

To A YOUNG FRIEND,

On his arrival at Cambridge wet, when no rain *had fallen there.*

If Gideon's fleece, which drench'd with dew he found,
While moisture none refresh'd the herbs around,
Might fitly represent the church, endow'd
With heavenly *gifts*, to heathens not allow'd;

In pledge, perhaps, of favours from on high,
Thy locks were wet, when other locks were dry.
Heav'n grant us half the omen! may we see,
Not drought on others, but much dew on thee!

These are spick and pan. Johnny himself has not yet seen them. By the way, he has filled your book completely; and I will give thee a guinea if thou wilt search thy old book for a couple of songs, and two or three other pieces of which I know thou madest copies at the Vicarage, and which I have lost. The songs I know are pretty good, and I would fain recover them.

W. C.

LETTER LXXI.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

Weston, June 6, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

I seize a passing moment merely to say, that I feel for your distresses and sincerely pity you, and I shall be happy to learn from your next, that your sister's amendment has superseded the necessity you feared, of a journey to London. Your candid account of the effect that your afflictions have both on your spirits and temper, I can perfectly understand, having laboured much in that fire myself, and perhaps more than any man. It is in such a school, however, that we must learn, if we ever truly learn it, the natural depravity of the human heart, and of our own in particular; together with the consequence that necessarily follows such wretched premises—our indispensible need of the atonement, and our inexpressible obli-

gations to him who made it. This reflection cannot escape a thinking mind, looking back on those ebullitions of fretfulness and impatience, to which it has yielded in a season of great affliction.

Having lately had company who left us only on the fourth, I have done nothing—nothing, indeed, since my return from Sussex, except a trifle or two which it was incumbent upon me to write. Milton hangs in doubt; neither spirits nor opportunity suffice me for that labour. I regret continually that I ever suffered myself to be persuaded to undertake it. The most that I hope to effect is a complete revisal of my own Homer. Johnson told my friend, who has just left me, that it will begin to be reviewed in the next Analytical, and that he *hoped* the review of it would not offend me. By this I understand that if I am not offended it will be owing more to my own equanimity than to the mildness of the critic. So be it! He will put an opportunity of victory over myself into my hands, and I will endeavour not to lose it. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LXXII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, June 20, 1792.

Dear architect of fine *chateaux in air*,
Worthier to stand for ever, if they could,
Than any built of stone, or yet of wood,
For back of royal elephant to bear!

Oh for permission from the skies to share,
Much to my own, though little to thy good,

With thee (not subject to the jealous mood)
A partnership of literary ware!

But I am bankrupt now; and doom'd henceforth
To drudge in descant dry, on others' lays;
Bards, I acknowledge, of unequal worth!
But what is commentator's happiest praise?

That he has furnish'd lights for other eyes,
Which they who need them use, and then despise.

What remains for me to say on this subject, my dear brother bard, I will say in prose. There are other impediments which I could not comprize within the bounds of a sonnet.

My poor Mary's infirm condition makes it impossible for me, at present, to engage in a work such as you propose. My thoughts are not sufficiently free, nor have I, or can I, by any means, find opportunity: added to which comes a difficulty, which, though you are not at all aware of it, presents itself to me under a most forbidding appearance: can you guess it? No, not you: neither, perhaps, will you be able to imagine that such a difficulty can possiby subsist. If your hair begins to bristle, stroak it down again, for there is no need why it should erect itself. It concerns me, not you. I know myself too well not to know that I am nobody in verse, unless in a corner, and alone, and unconnected in my operations. This is not owing to want of love for you, my brother, or the most consummate confidence in you; for I have both in a degree that has not been exceeded in the experience of any friend you have, or ever had. But I am so made up; I will not enter into a metaphysical analysis of my strange composition in order to detect the true cause of this evil;

but, on a general view of the matter, I suspect that it proceeds from that shyness, which has been my effectual and almost fatal hinderance on many other important occasions; and which I should feel, I well know, to a degree that would perfectly cripple me.——No! I shall neither do, nor attempt any thing of consequence more, unless my poor Mary get better—nor even then, unless it should please God to give me another nature—in concert with any man; I could not, even with my own father or brother, were they now alive. Small game must serve me at present, and till I have done with Homer and Milton, a sonnet, or some such matter must content me. The utmost that I aspire to, (and heaven knows with how feeble a hope) is to write, at some better opportunity, and when my hands are free, *The four Ages*. Thus I have opened my heart unto thee.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, July 7, 1793.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

If the excessive heat of this day, which forbids me to do any thing else, will permit me to scribble to you, I shall rejoice. To do this is a pleasure to me at all times, but to do it now, a double one; because I am in haste to tell you how much I am delighted with your projected quadruple alliance, and to assure you, that if it please God to afford me health, spirits, ability, and leisure, I will not fail to devote them all to the production of my quota, *The four Ages*.

You are very kind to humour me as you do, and had need be a little touched yourself with all my oddities, that you may know how to administer to mine. All whom I love do so, and I believe it to be impossible to love heartily those who do not. People must not do me good in *their* way, but in my *own*, and then they do me good indeed. My pride, my ambition, and my friendship for you, and the interest I take in my own dear self, will all be consulted and gratified by an arm-in-arm appearance with you in public; and I shall work with more zeal and assiduity at Homer; and when Homer is finished at Milton, with the prospect of such a coalition before me. But what shall I do with a multitude of small pieces from which I intended to select the best, and adding them to The four Ages, to have made a volume? Will there be room for them upon your plan? I have re-touched them, and will re-touch them again. Some of them will suggest pretty devices to a designer, and, in short, I have a desire not to lose them.

I am at this moment, with all the imprudence natural to poets, expending nobody knows what, in embellishing my premises, or rather the premises of my neighbour Courteney, which is more poetical still. I have built one summer-house already with the boards of my old study, and am building another, spick and span as they say. I have also a stone-cutter now at work, setting a bust of my dear old Grecian on a pedestal; and beside all this, I meditate still more, that is to be done in the autumn. Your project, therefore, is most opportune; as any project must needs be that has so distinct a tendency to put money into the pocket of one so likely to want it.

Ah brother poet! send me of your shade,
And bid the zephyrs hasten to my aid;
Or, like a worm unearth'd at noon, I go,
Dispatch'd by sunshine, to the shades below.

My poor Mary is as well as the heat will allow her to be, and whether it be cold or sultry, is always affectionately mindful of you and yours. Adieu.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIV.

To the Reverend Mr. GREATHEED.

July 23, 1793.

I was not without some expectation of a line from you, my dear sir, though you did not promise me one at your departure; and am happy not to have been disappointed: still happier to learn that you and Mrs. Greatheed are well, and so delightfully situated. Your kind offer to us of sharing with us the house which you at present inhabit, added to the short but lively description of the scenery that surrounds it, want nothing to win our acceptance, should it please God to give Mrs. Unwin a little more strength and should I be ever master of my time, so as to be able to gratify myself with what would please me most. But many have claims upon us, and some who cannot absolutely be said to have any, would yet complain and think themselves slighted, should we prefer rocks and caves to them. In short, we are called so many ways, that these numerous demands are likely to operate as a *remora*, and to keep us fixt at home. Here we can occasionally have the pleasure of yours and Mrs. Greatheed's company, and to have it here must, I be-

lieve, content us. Hayley, in his last letter, gives me reason to expect the pleasure of seeing him and his dear boy Tom in the autumn. He will use all his eloquence to draw us to Eartham again. My cousin Johnny of Norfolk holds me under promise to make my first trip thither, and the very same promise I have hastily made to visit Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, at Bucklands. How to reconcile such clashing promises, and give satisfaction to all, would puzzle me, had I nothing else to do; and therefore, as I say, the result will probably be, that we shall find ourselves obliged to go no where, since we cannot every where.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Wishing you both safe at home again, and to see you as soon as may be here, I remain affectionately yours, W. C.

LETTER LXXV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, July 24, 1793.

I have been vexed with myself, my dearest brother, and with every thing about me, not excepting even Homer himself, that I have been obliged so long to delay an answer to your last kind letter. If I listen any longer to calls another way, I shall hardly be able to tell you how happy we are in the hope of seeing you in the autumn, before autumn will have arrived. Thrice welcome will you and your dear boy be to us, and the longer you will afford us your company, the more welcome. I have set up the head of Homer, on a famous fine pedestal, and a very majestic appearance he makes. I am now puzzled

about a motto, and wish you to decide for me between two, one of which I have composed myself, a Greek one as follows:

Εικονα τις ταυτην; κλυτον αιεχος ανομ' ολωλεν.
Ουνομα δ' αυτος ανηρ αφθιτον αιεν εχει.

The other is my own translation of a passage in the Odyssey, the original of which I have seen used as a motto to an engraved head of Homer many a time. The present edition of the lines stands thus:

Him partially the muse,
And dearly lov'd, yet gave him good and ill:
She quench'd his sight, but gave him strains divine.

Tell me, by the way, (if you ever had any speculations on the subject) what is it you suppose Homer to have meant in particular, when he ascribed his blindness to the muse? for that he speaks of himself, under the name of Demodocus, in the eighth book, I believe, is by all admitted. How could the old bard study himself blind, when books were either few, or none at all? And did he write his poems? If neither were the cause, as seems reasonable to imagine, how could he incur his blindness by such means as could be justly imputable to the muse? Would mere thinking blind him? I want to know:

"Call up some spirit from the vasty deep!"

I said to Sam*—"Sam, build me a shed in the gar-

* A very affectionate worthy domestic who attended his master into Sussex.

den, with any thing that you can find, and make it rude and rough like one of those at Eartham." "Yes, Sir," says Sam, and straightway laying his own noddle and the carpenter's noddle together, has built me a thing fit for Stow gardens. Is not this vexatious? I threaten to inscribe it thus:

Beware of building! I intended
Rough logs and thatch, and thus it ended.

But my Mary says I shall break Sam's heart, and the carpenter's too, and will not consent to it. Poor Mary sleeps but ill. How have you lived who cannot bear a sun-beam?

Adieu, my dearest Hayley. W. C.

LETTER LXXVI.

To Lady HESKETH.

Weston, August 11, 1793.

MY DEAREST COZ.

I am glad that my poor and hasty attempts to express some little civility to Miss Fanshaw, and the amiable Count, have your and her approbation. The lines addressed to her were not what I would have made them, but lack of time, a lack which always presses me, would not suffer me to improve them. Many thanks for her letter, which, were my merits less the subject of it, I should, without scruple, say is an excellent one. She writes with the force and accuracy of a person skilled in more languages than are spoken in the present day, as I doubt not that she is. I perfectly approve the theme she recommends to me, but am at present so totally absorbed

in Homer, that all I do beside is ill done, being hurried over; and I would not execute ill a subject of her recommending.

I shall watch the walnut-trees with more attention than they who eat them, which I do in some hope, though you do not expressly say so, that when their threshing-time arrives we shall see you here. I am now going to paper my new study, and in a short time it will be fit to inhabit.

Lady Spencer has sent me a present from Rome, by the hands of Sir John Throckmorton—engravings of Odyssey subjects, after figures of Flaxman, a statuary at present resident there, of high repute, and much a friend of Hayley's.

Thou livest, my dear, I acknowledge, in a very fine country, but they have spoiled it by building London in it. Adieu. W. C.

LETTER LXXVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, August 15, 1793.

Instead of a pound or two, spending a mint
Must serve me at least, I believe, with a hint,
That building and building a man may be driven
At last out of doors, and have no house to live in.

Besides, my dearest brother, they have not only built for me what I did not want, but have ruined a notable tetrastic by doing so. I had written one which I designed for a hermitage, and it will by no means suit the fine and pompous affair which they have made instead of one. So that, as a poet, I am every way

afflicted; made poorer than I need have been, and robbed of my verses. What case can be more deplorable?

You must not suppose me ignorant of what Flaxman has done, or that I have not seen it, or that I am not actually in possession of it, at least of the engravings which you mention. In fact, I have had them more than a fortnight. Lady Dowager Spencer, to whom I inscribed my Odyssey, and who was at Rome when Sir John Throckmorton was there, charged him with them as a present to me, and arriving here lately he executed his commission. Romney, I doubt not, is right in his judgment of them: he is an artist himself, and cannot easily be mistaken; and I take his opinion as an oracle, the rather, because it coincides exactly with my own. The figures are highly classical, antique, and elegant; especially that of Penelope, who whether she wakes or sleeps, must necessarily charm all beholders.

Your scheme of embellishing my Odyssey with these plates is a kind one, and the fruit of your benevolence to me; but Johnson, I fear, will hardly stake so much money as the cost would amount to, on a work, the fate of which is at present uncertain. Nor could we adorn the Odyssey in this splendid manner, unless we had similar ornaments to bestow on the Iliad. Such, I presume, are not ready, and much time must elapse, even if Flaxman should accede to the plan, before he could possibly prepare them. Happy, indeed, should I be to see a work of mine so nobly accompanied, but should that good fortune ever attend me, it cannot take place till the third or fourth edition shall afford the occasion. This I regret, and regret too, that you will have seen them before I can have an opportunity to show them to you. Here is six-pence for you if you

will abstain from the sight of them while you are in London.

The sculptor?—nameless, though once dear to fame;
But this man bears an everlasting name.*

So I purpose it shall stand; and on the pedestal, when you come, in that form you will find it. The added line from the Odyssey is charming, but the assumption of sonship to Homer seems too daring. Suppose it stood thus:—

Ὡς δὴ παις φ πατρι, και υστατε λισσομαι αυτῳ.

I am not sure that this would be clear of the same objection, and it departs from the text still more.

With my poor Mary's best love, and our united wishes to see you here, I remain, my dearest brother, ever yours, W. C.

LETTER LXXVIII.

To Mrs. COURTENEY.

Weston, August 20, 1793.

My dearest Catharina is too reasonable, I know, to expect news from me, who live on the outside of the world, and know nothing that passes within it. The best news is, that though you are gone, you are not gone for ever, as once I supposed you were, and said that we should probably meet no more. Some news, however, we have; but then I conclude you have already received it from the Doctor,

* A translation of Cowper's Greek verses on his bust of Homer.

and that thought almost deprives me of all courage to relate it. On the evening of the feast, Bob Archer's house affording, I suppose, the best room for the purpose, all the lads and lasses who felt themselves disposed to dance, assembled there. Long time they danced, at least long time they did something a little like it, when at last the company having retired, the fiddler asked Bob for a lodging. Bob replied that his beds were all full of his own family, but if he chose it he would show him a hay-cock, where he might sleep as sound as in any bed whatever. So forth they went together, and when they reached the place, the fiddler knocked down Bob and demanded his money. But happily for Bob, though he might be knocked down, and actually was so, yet he could not possibly be robbed, having nothing. The fiddler, therefore, having amused himself with kicking and beating him as he lay, as long as he saw good, left him, and has never been heard of since, nor inquired after indeed, being no doubt the last man in the world whom Bob wishes to see again.

By a letter from Hayley to-day, I learn that Flaxman, to whom we are indebted for those Odyssey figures which Lady Frog brought over, has almost finished a set for the Iliad also. I should be glad to embellish my Homer with them, but neither my bookseller nor I shall probably choose to risque so expensive an ornament on a work, whose reception with the public is at present doubtful.

Adieu, my dearest Catharina. Give my best love to your husband. Come home as soon as you can, and accept our united very best wishes.

W. C.

LETTER LXXIX.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

The Lodge, August 22, 1793.

DEAR FRIEND,

I rejoice that you have had so sant an excursion, and have beheld so many beau- scenes. Except the delightful upway, I have seen ı all. I have lived much at Southampton, have t and caught a sore-throat at Lyndhurst, and have m in the bay of Weymouth. It will give us great sure to see you here, should your business give you ɔpportunity to finish your excursions of this season ı one to Weston.

s for my going on, it is much as usual. I rise at an industrious and wholesome practice from ch I have never swerved since March. I break- generally about eleven—have given all the inter- liate time to my old delightful bard. Villoisson no ɛer keeps me company. I therefore now jog along ı Clarke and Barnes at my elbow, and from the ex- ɛnt annotations of the former select such as I think ly to be useful, or that recommend themselves by amusement they may afford; of which sorts there not a few. Barnes also affords me some of both ls, but not so many, his notes being chiefly para- astical or grammatical. My only fear is lest, be- en them both, I should make my work too volumi- s.

W. C.

LETTER LXXX.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, August 27, 1793.

I thank you, my dear brother, for consulting the Gibbonian oracle on the question concerning Homer's muse, and his blindness. I proposed it likewise to my little neighbour Buchanan, who gave me precisely the same answer. I felt an insatiable thirst to learn something new concerning him, and, despairing of information from others, was willing to hope that I had stumbled on matter unnoticed by the commentators, and might, perhaps, acquire a little intelligence from himself. But the great and the little oracle together have extinguished that hope, and I despair now of making any curious discoveries about him.

Since Flaxman (which I did not know till your letter told me so) has been at work for the Iliad, as well as the Odyssey, it seems a great pity that the engravings should not be bound up with some Homer or other; and, as I said before, I should have been too proud to have bound them up in mine. But there is an objection, at least such it seems to me, that threatens to disqualify them for such a use; namely, the shape and size of them, which are such that no book of the usual form could possibly receive them, save in a folded state, which, I apprehend, would be to murder them.

The monument of Lord Mansfield, for which you say he is engaged, will, I dare say, prove a noble effort of genius. Statuaries, as I have heard an eminent one say, do not much trouble themselves about a likeness: else I would give much to be able to communicate to Flaxman the perfect idea that I have of the subject, such as he was forty years ago. He was at that time

wonderfully handsome, and would expound the most mysterious intricacies of the law, or recapitulate both matter and evidence of a cause, as long as from hence to Eartham, with an intelligent smile on his features, that bespoke plainly the perfect ease with which he did it. The most abstruse studies, I believe, never cost him any labour.

You say nothing lately of your intended journey our way: yet the year is waning, and the shorter days give you a hint to lose no time unnecessarily.—Lately we had the whole family at the Hall, and now we have nobody. The Throckmortons are gone into Berkshire, and the Courteneys into Yorkshire. They are so pleasant a family, that I heartily wish you to see them; and at the same time wish to see you before they return, which will not be sooner than October. How shall I reconcile these wishes, seemingly opposite? Why, by wishing that you may come soon and stay long. I know no other way of doing it.

My poor Mary is much as usual.—I have set up Homer's head, and inscribed the pedestal; my own Greek at the top, with your translation under it, and

Ως δη παις ω πατερι, &c.

It makes altogether a very smart and learned appearance. W. C.

LETTER LXXXI.

To Lady HESKETH.

August 29, 1793.

Your question, at what time your coming to us will be most agreeable, is a knotty

one, and such as, had I the wisdom of Solomon, I should be puzzled to answer. I will, therefore, leave it still a question, and refer the time of your journey Weston-ward entirely to your own election; adding this one limitation, however, that I do not wish to see you exactly at present, on account of the unfinished state of my study, the wainscot of which still smells of paint, and which is not yet papered. But to return: as I have insinuated, thy pleasant company is the thing which I always wish, and as much at one time as at another. I believe, if I examine myself minutely, since I despair of ever having it in the height of summer, which, for your sake, I should desire most, the depth of the winter is the season which would be most eligible to me. For then it is that, in general, I have most need of a cordial, and particularly in the month of January. I am sorry, however, that I have departed so far from my first purpose, and am answering a question which I declared myself unable to answer. Choose thy own time, secure of this, that whatever time that be, it will always to us be a welcome one.

I thank you for your pleasant extract of Miss Fanshaw's letter.

> Her pen drops eloquence as sweet
> As any muse's tongue can speak;
> Nor need a scribe, like her, regret
> Her want of Latin or of Greek.

And now, my dear, adieu! I have done more than I expected, and begin to feel exhausted with so much scribbling at the end of four hours close application to study.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXII.

To the Reverend Mr. JOHNSON.

Weston, Sept. 6, 1793.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

To do a kind thing, and in a kind manner, is a double kindness, and no man is more addicted to both than you, or more skilful in contriving them. Your plan to surprise me agreeably succeeded to admiration. It was only the day before yesterday that, while we walked after dinner in the orchard, Mrs. Unwin between Sam and me, hearing the Hall-clock, I observed a great difference between that and ours, and began immediately to lament, as I had often done, that there was not a sun-dial in all Weston to ascertain the true time for us. My complaint was long, and lasted till, having turned into the grass walk, we reached the new building at the end of it, where we sat awhile and reposed ourselves. In a few minutes we returned by the way we came, when what think you was my astonishment to see what I had not seen before, though I had passed close by it, a smart sun-dial mounted on a smart stone pedestal! I assure you it seemed the effect of conjuration. I stopped short, and exclaimed, "Why, here is a sun-dial, and upon our own ground! How is this? Tell me, Sam, how came it here? Do you know any thing about it?" At first I really thought (that is to say, as soon as I could think at all) that this fac-totum of mine, Sam Roberts, having often heard me deplore the want of one, had given orders for the supply of that want himself, without my knowledge, and was half pleased and half offended. But he soon exculpated himself by imputing the fact to you. It was brought up to Weston, it seems, about noon: but Andrews stopped the cart at the black-

smith's, whence he sent to inquire if I was gone to my walk. As it happened, I walked not till two o'clock. So there it stood waiting till I should go forth, and was introduced before my return. Fortunately, too, I went out at the church end of the village, and consequently saw nothing of it. How I could possibly pass it without seeing it, when it stood in the walk, I know not; but it is certain that I did: and where I shall fix it now I know as little. It cannot stand between the two gates, the place of your choice, as I understand from Samuel, because the hay-cart must pass that way in the season. But we are now busy in winding the walk all round the orchard, and in so doing shall doubtless stumble at last upon some open spot that will suit it.

There it shall stand while I live, a constant monument of your kindness.

I have this moment finished the twelfth book of the Odyssey, and I read the Iliad to Mrs. Unwin every evening.

The effect of this reading is, that I still spy blemishes, something, at least, that I can mend; so that, after all, the transcript of alterations which you and George have made will not be a perfect one. It would be foolish to forego an opportunity of improvement for such a reason; neither will I. It is ten o'clock, and I must breakfast. Adieu, therefore, my dear Johnny! Remember your appointment to see us in October.

Ever yours, W. C.

LETTER LXXXIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Sept. 8,

Non sum quod simulo, my est brother! I seem cheerful upon paper somet when I am absolutely the most dejected of all c tures. Desirous, however, to gain something m by my own letters, unprofitable as they may and n be to my friends, I keep melancholy out of them much as I can, that I may, if possible, by assumin less gloomy air, deceive myself, and by feigning wi continuance, improve the fiction into reality.

So you have seen Flaxman's figures, which I inten ed you should not have seen till I had spread them b fore you! How did you dare to look at them? Yo should have covered your eyes with both hands. I an charmed with Flaxman's Penelope, and though you don't deserve that I should, will send you a few lines such as they are, with which she inspired me the other day while I was taking my noon-day walk.

The suitors sinn'd, but with a fair excuse,
Whom all this elegance might well seduce;
Nor can our censure on the husband fall,
Who, for a wife so lovely, slew them all.

I know not that you will meet any body here when you see us in October, unless, perhaps, my Johnny should happen to be with us. If Tom is charmed with the thoughts of coming to Weston, we are equally so with the thoughts of seeing him here. At his years I should hardly hope to make his visit agreeable to him. Id not I know that he is of a temper and disposition at must make him happy every where. Give our

love to him. If Romney can come with you, we both room to receive him, and hearts to make welcome. W. C.

LETTER LXXXIV.
To Mrs. COURTENEY.

Sept. 16, 179

A thousand thanks, my dear Catharina, for your pleasant letter; one of the pleasantest that I have received since your departure. You are very good to apologize for your delay, but I had not flattered myself with the hopes of a speedier answer. Knowing full well your talents for entertaining your friends who are present, I was sure you would with difficulty find half an hour that you could devote to an absent one.

I am glad that you think of your return. Poor Weston is a desolation without you. In the mean time I amuse myself as well as I can, thrumming old Homer's lyre, and turning the premises upside down. Upside down indeed, for so it is literally that I have been dealing with the orchard almost ever since you went, digging and delving it around to make a new walk, which now begins to assume the shape of one, and to look as if, some time or other, it may serve in that capacity. Taking my usual exercise there the other day with Mrs. Unwin, a wide disagreement between your clock and ours occasioned me to complain much, as I have often done, of the want of a dial. Guess my surprise when, at the close of my complaint, I saw one; saw one close at my side, a smart one, glittering in the sun, and mounted on a pedestal of stone. I was astonished. "This," I exclaimed, "is

absolute conjuration."—It was a most mysterious affair, but the mystery was at last explained.

This scribble, I presume, will find you just arrived at Bucklands. I would with all my heart, that, since dials can be thus suddenly conjured from one place to another, I could be so too, and could start up before your eyes in the middle of some walk or lawn, where you and Lady Frog are wandering.

While Pitcairne whistles for his family-estate in Fifeshire, he will do well if he will sound a few notes for me. I am originally of the same shire, and a family of my name is still there, to whom, perhaps, he may whistle on my behalf, not altogether in vain. So shall his fife excel all my poetical efforts, which have not yet, and I dare say never will, effectually charm one acre of ground into my possession.

Remember me to Sir John, Lady Frog, and your husband; tell them I love them all. She told me once she was jealous; now, indeed, she seems to have some reason, since to her I have not written, and have written twice to you. But bid her be of good courage; in due time I will give her proof of my constancy.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXV.

To the Reverend Mr. JOHNSON.

Sept. 29, 1793.

MY DEAREST JOHNNY,

You have done well to leave off visiting and being visited. Visits are insatiable devourers of time, and fit only for those who, if they did not that, would do nothing. The worst consequence of such departures from common practise is to be term-

ed a singular sort of a fellow, or an odd-fish; a sort of reproach that a man might be wise enough to contemn, who had not half your understanding.

I look forward with pleasure to October the eleventh, the day which I expect will be *albo notandus lapillo*, on account of your arival here.

Here you will meet Mr. Rose, who comes on the eighth, and brings with him Mr. Lawrence the painter—you may guess for what purpose. Lawrence returns when he has made his copy of me, but Mr. Rose will remain perhaps as long as you will. Hayley, on the contrary, will come I suppose, just in time not to see you. Him we expect on the twentieth. I trust however that thou wilt so order thy pastoral matters, as to make thy stay here as long as possible.

Lady Hesketh, in her last letter, inquires very kindly after you; asked for your address, and purposes soon to write to you. We hope to see her in November: so that after a summer without company, we are likely to have an autumn and winter sociable enough.

LETTER LXXXVI.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

October 5, 1793.

My good intentions towards you, my dearest brother, are continually frustrated; and, which is most provoking, not by such engagements and avocations as have a right to my attention, such as those to my Mary, and to the old bard of Greece, but mere impertinences, such as calls of civility from persons not very interesting to me, and letters from a distance still less interesting, because the writers of them are strangers. A man sent me a long copy of verses,

which I could do no less than acknowledge. They were silly enough, and cost me eighteen pence, which was seventeen pence half-penny farthing more than they were worth. Another sent me, at the same time, a plan, requesting my opinion of it, and that I would lend him my name as editor; a request with which I shall not comply; but I am obliged to tell him so, and one letter is all that I have time to dispatch in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes I am not able to write at all. Thus it is that my time perishes, and I can neither give so much of it as I would to you, nor to any other valuable purpose.

On Tuesday we expect company—Mr. Rose and Lawrence the painter. Yet once more is my patience to be exercised, and once more I am made to wish that my face had been moveable, to put on and take off at pleasure, so as to be portable in a band-box, and sent to the artist. These, however, will be gone, as I believe I told you, before you arrive, at which time I know not that any body will be here, except my Johnny, whose presence will not at all interfere with our readings. You will not, I believe, find me a very slashing critic. I hardly, indeed, expect to find any thing in your life of Milton that I shall sentence to amputation. How should it be too long? A well written work, sensible and spirited, such as yours was when I saw it, is never so. But, however, we shall see. I promise to spare nothing that I think may be lopped off with advantage

I began this letter yesterdav, but could not finish it till now. I have risen this morning like an infernal frog out of Acheron, covered with the ouze and mud of melancholy. For this reason I am not sorry to find myself at the bottom of my paper, for had I more room, perhaps I might fill it all with croaking, and

make a heart-ache at Eartham, which I wish to be always cheerful. Adieu. My poor sympathising Mary is of course sad, but always mindful of you.

W. C.

LETTER LXXXVII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Oct. 18, 1793.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

I have not, at present, much that is necessary to say here, because I shall have the happiness of seeing you so soon: my time, according to custom, is a mere scrap; for which reason such must be my letter also.

You will find here more than I have hitherto given you reason to expect, but none who will not be happy to see you. These, however, stay with us but a short time, and will leave us in full possession of Weston on Wednesday next.

I look forward with joy to your coming, heartily wishing you a pleasant journey, in which my poor Mary joins me. Give our best love to Tom; without whom, after having been taught to look for him, we should feel our pleasure in the interview much diminished.

Læti expectamus et puerumque tuum.

W. C.

My second visit to Weston (a scene that I cannot mention without feeling it endeared to me by the pleasures and by the pains of joyous and of mournful re-

ance) took place very soon after the date of the
ter. I found Cowper apparently well, and en-
l by the society of his young kinsman from
k, and another of his favourite friends, Mr. Rose.
tter came recently from the seat of Lord Spen-
Northamptonshire, and commissioned by that
olished nobleman to invite Cowper and his guests
horpe, where my friend Gibbon was to make a
considerable continuance.
he guests of Cowper now recommended it to
ery strongly, to venture on this little excursion
use whose master he most cordially respected,
ose library alone might be regarded as a mag-
very powerful attraction to every elegant scho-

shed to see Cowper and Gibbon personally ac-
ed, because I perfectly knew the real benevo-
f both; for widely as they might differ on one
ant article, they were both able and worthy to
iate and enjoy the extraordinary mental pow-
d the rare colloquial excellence of each other.
ie constitutional shyness of the poet conspired
ie present infirm state of Mrs. Unwin to prevent
meeting. He sent Mr. Rose and me to make
ology for declining so honourable an invitation.
a visit to Althorpe, where we had nothing to re-
ut the absence of Cowper, I returned to devote
to him, when his younger guests were departed.
ocial employment, at this season, he has very
ully described in the following letter to Mrs.
ney.

LETTER LXXXVIII.
To Mrs. COURTENEY.

Weston, Nov. 4, 179

I seldom rejoice in a day of soaking rain like this; but in this, my dearest Catharina, I do rejoice sincerely, because it affords me an opportunity of writing to you, which, if fair weather had invited us into the orchard-walk at the usual hour, I should not have easily found. I am a most busy man, busy to a degree that sometimes half distracts me; but if complete distraction be occasioned by having the thoughts too much and too long attached to a single point, I am in no danger of it, with such a perpetual whirl are mine whisked about from one subject to another. When two poets meet there are fine doings, I can assure you. My Homer finds work for Hayley, and his Life of Milton work for me, so that we are neither of us one moment idle. Poor Mrs. Unwin, in the mean time, sits quiet in her corner, occasionally laughing at us both, and not seldom interrupting us with some question or remark, for which she is constantly rewarded by me, with a "Hush—hold your peace."——Bless yourself, my dear Catharina, that you are not connected with a poet, especially that you have not two to deal with: ladies who have may be bidden, indeed, to hold their peace, but very little peace have they. How should they, in fact, have any, continually enjoined as they are to be silent?

* * * * * * * * * * *

The same fever that has been so epidemic there, has been severely felt here likewise: some have died, and a multitude have been in danger. Two under our

own roof have been infected with it, and I am not sur that I have perfectly escaped myself, but I am no well again.

I have persuaded Hayley to stay a week longer, an again my hopes revive that he may yet have an oppor tunity to know my friends before he returns into Sus sex.—I write amidst a chaos of interruptions. Hayle on one hand spouts Greek, and on the other han Mrs. Unwin continues talking, sometimes to us, an sometimes, because we are both too busy to attend t her, she holds a dialogue with herself. Quere—Is no this a bull? and ought I not, instead of dialogue, t have said soliloquy?

Adieu. With our united love to all your party, an with ardent wishes to see you all at Weston, I remain my dearest Catharina, ever yours,

W. C.

Cowper entreated me, with great kindness, to re main the whole winter at Weston, and engage with him in a regular and complete revisal of his Homer. wanted not inclination for an office so agreeable; bu it struck me that I might render much more essentia service to the poet, as I returned through London, by quickening in the minds of his more powerful friends a seasonable attention to his interest and welfare. My fears for him, in every point of view, were alarmed by his present very singular condition. He possessed completely, at this period, all the admirable faculties of his mind, and all the native tenderness of his heart; but there was something indescribable in his appear ance, which led me to apprehend that without some

signal event in his favour to re-animate his spirits, t would gradually sink into hopeless dejection. T state of his aged, infirm companion afforded additio ground for increasing solicitude. Her cheerful beneficent spirit could hardly resist her own accu lated maladies so far as to preserve ability suffici to watch over the tender health of him whom she h watched and guarded so long. Imbecility of body mind must gradually render this tender and her woman unfit for the charge which she had so laudably sustained. The signs of such imbecility where beginning to be painfully visible: nor can nature present a spectacle more truly pitiable than imbecility in such a shape, eagerly grasping for dominion which it knows not either how to retain or how to relinquish.

I left Weston in November, painfully anxious for the alarming state of my two friends, and I was so unfortunate as to add to their complicated troubles some degree of inquietude for my health. A slight attack of an epidemical fever had rather hastened than retarded my departure; but my indisposition proved more serious than I had supposed it to be; and instead of being able to execute some literary commissions for Cowper in London, with the alacrity which affection suggests, I was obliged to inform him that I was confined by illness. He wrote to me immediately, with the tenderness peculiar to himself, and my reviving health soon enabled me to enliven his apprehensive mind, not only with an account of my recovery, but with intelligence relating to his own literary engagements that had a tendency to relieve his spirits from a considerable part of their present embarrassment and dejection. His next letter to one of his confidential friends contains a very cheerful and just description of his favourite residence.

LETTER LXXXIX.

To JOSEPH HILL, Esquire.

November 5, 1793.

Y DEAR FRIEND,

In a letter from Lady Hesketh, ıich I received not long since, she informed me how ry pleasently she had spent some time at Wargrove. 'e now begin to expect her here, where our charms of uation are, perhaps, not equal to yours, yet by no eans contemptible. She told me she had spoken to you in very handsome terms of the country rond about us, but not so of our house, and the view before it. The house itself, however, is not unworthy some commendation; small as it is, it is neat, and neater than she is aware of; for my study and the room over it have been repaired and beautified this summer, and little more was wanting to make it an abode sufficiently commodious for a man of my moderate desires. As to the prospect from it, that she misrepresented strangely, as I hope soon to have an opportunity to convince her by ocular demonstration. She told you, I know, of certain cottages opposite to us, or rather she described them as poor houses and hovels, that effectually blind our windows. But none such exist. On the contrary, the opposite object, and the only one, is an orchard so well planted, and with trees of such growth, that we seem to look into a wood, or rather to be surrounded by one. Thus, placed as we are in the midst of a village, we have none of the disagreeables that belong to such a position; and the village itself is one of the prettiest I know; terminated at one end by the church-tower, seen through trees, and at the other by a very handsome gateway, opening into a fine grove of elms, belonging to

our neighbour Courteney. How happy should I be
show it instead of describing it to you!
Adieu, my dear friend. W. C.

LETTER XC.

To the Reverend Mr. HURDIS.

Weston, November 24, 17

MY DEAR SIR,

Though my congratulations ha
been delayed, you have no friend, numerous as yo
friends are, who has more sincerely rejoiced in yo
success than I. It was no small mortification to me
find that three of the six whom I had engaged, we
not qualified to vote. You have prevailed, howeve
and by a considerable majority; there is, therefore, 1
room left for regret. When your short note arrive
which gave me the agreeable news of your victor
our friend of Eartham was with me, and shared larg
ly in the joy that I felt on the occasion. He le
me but a few days since, having spent somewhat mo
than a fortnight here: during which time we emplo
ed all our leisure hours in the revisal of his Life
Milton. It is now finished, and a very finished work
is; and one that will do great honour, I am persuade
to the biographer, and the excellent man, of injure
memory, who is the subject of it. As to my own cor
cern with the works of this first of poets, which ha
long been a matter of burthensome contemplation,
have the happiness to find, at last, that I am at libert
to postpone my labours. While I expected that m
commentary would be called for in the ensuing sprin
I looked forward to the undertaking with dismay,
seeing a shadow of probability that I should be rea

wer the demand: for this ultimate revisal of my mer, together with the notes, occupies completely at resent (and will for some time longer) all the little leisure that I have for study—leisure which I gain at this season of the year, by rising long before day-light.

You are now become a nearer neighbour, and as your professorship, I hope, will not engross you wholly, will find an opportunity to give me your company at Weston. Let me hear from you soon, tell me how you like your new office, and whether you perform the duties of it with pleasure to yourself. With much pleasure to others you will, I doubt not, and with equal advantage. W. C.

LETTER XCI.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

Weston, Nov. 29, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have risen, while the owls are still hooting, to pursue my accustomed labours in the mine of Homer; but before I enter upon them, shall give the first moment of day-light to the purpose of thanking you for your last letter, containing many pleasant articles of intelligence, with nothing to abate the pleasantness of them, except the single circumstance that we are not likely to see you here as soon as I expected. My hope was that the first frost would bring you, and the amiable painter with you: if, however, you are prevented by the business of your respective professions, you are well prevented, and I will endeavour to be patient. When the latter was here, he mentioned, one day, the subject of Diomede's horses driven under the axle of his chariot, by the thunder-bolt which fell

at their feet, as a subject he had settled for l
It is certainly a noble one, and therefore worthy
dy and attention. It occurred to me at the mon
know not what it was that made me forget it aga
moment, that the horses of Achilles flying ove
with Patroclus and Automedon in the chariot
a good companion for it. Should you happen t
this when you next see him, you may submit
please, to his consideration. I stumbled yes
another subject, which reminded me of said
artist, as likely to afford a fine opportunity
pression that he could give to it. It is fo
shooting-match, in the twenty-third book of
between Mariones and Teucer. The forme
string with which the dove is tied to the r
and sets her at liberty; the latter, standing
in all the eagerness of emulation, points a
the mark with his right hand, while, with h
snatches the bow from his competitor. He
poetical figure: but Mr. Lawrence himself
whether or not he promises as well for the c

He does great honour to my physiognomy
tention to get it engraved; and though I thin
that this *private publication* will grow, in t
publication of absolute publicity, I find it im
be dissatisfied with any thing that seems el
to him and you. To say the truth, when
once turned his mind inside out, for the ins
all who choose to inspect it, to make a s
face seems but little better than a self-co
At the same time, however, I shall be bes
it be kept, according to your intentions, as

I have lost Hayley, and begin to be un
hearing from him: tell me about him when

I should be happy to have a work of mine
ed by Lawrence, and made a companion fo

ayley's. It is an event to which I look forward with he utmost complacence. I cannot tell you what a relief I feel it, not to be pressed for Milton.

W. C.

LETTER XCII.

To SAMUEL ROSE, Esquire.

December 8, 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

In my last I forgot to thank you for the box of books, containing also the pamphlets. We have read, that is to say, my cousin has, who reads to us in an evening, the history of Jonathan Wild, and found it highly entertaining. The satire on great men is witty, and, I believe, perfectly just. We have no censure to pass on it, unless that we think the character of Mrs. Hartfree not well sustained; not quite delicate in the latter part of it; and that the constant effect of her charms upon every man that sees her has a sameness in it that is tiresome, and betrays either much carelessness, or idleness, or lack of invention. It is possible, indeed, that the author might intend, by this circumstance, a satirical glance at novelists, whose heroines are generally all bewitching; but it is a fault that he had better have noticed in another manner, and not have exemplified in his own.

The first volume of *Man as he is*, has lain unread in my study window this twelvemonth, and would have been returned unread to its owner, had not my cousin come in good time to save it from that disgrace. We are now reading it, and find it excellent; abounding with wit and just sentiment, and knowledge both of books and men. Adieu,

W. C.

LETTER XCIII.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

December 8, 1793.

I have waited, and waited impatiently, for a line from you, and am at last determined to send you one, to inquire what is become of you, and why you are silent so much longer than usual.

I want to know many things which only you can tell me, but especially I want to know what has been the issue of your conference with Nichol: has he seen your work? I am impatient for the appearance of it, because impatient to have the spotless credit of the great poet's character, as a man and a citizen, vindicated as it ought to be, and as it never will be again.

It is a great relief to me that my Miltonic labours are suspended. I am now busy in transcribing the alterations of Homer, having finished the whole revisal. I must then write a new preface, which done I shall endeavour immediately to descant on *The four Ages*. Adieu, my dear brother.

W. C.

The reader may now be anxious to learn some particulars of the projected poem, which has been repeatedly mentioned under the title of "*The four Ages*;" a poem to which the mind of Cowper looked eagerly forward, as to a new and highly promising field for his excursive and benevolent fancy. The idea had been suggested to him in the year 1791, by a very amiable clerical neighbour, Mr. Buchanan, who, in the humble curacy of Ravenstone, (a little sequestered village within a distance of an easy walk from Weston)

sses, in a scene of rustic privacy, such extensive scholarship, such gentleness of manners, and such a contemplative dignity of mind, as would certainly raise him to a more suitable, and, indeed, to a conspicuous situation, if the professional success of a divine were the immediate consequence of exemplary merit. This gentleman, who had occasionally enjoyed the gratification of visiting Cowper, suggested to him, with a becoming diffidence, the project of a new poem on the four distinct periods of life, infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. He imparted his ideas to the poet by a letter, in which he observed, with equal modesty and truth, that Cowper was particularly qualified to relish and to do justice to the subject; a subject which he supposed not hitherto treated expressly, as its importance deserves, by any poet, ancient or modern.

Mr. Buchanan added to this letter a brief sketch of contents for the projected composition. This hasty sketch he enlarged by the kind encouragement of Cowper. How cheerfully the poet received the idea, and how liberally he applauded the worthy divine who suggested it, will appear from the following billet, written immediately on the receipt of the more ample sketch.

To the Reverend Mr. BUCHANAN.

Weston, May 11, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

You have sent me a beautiful poem, wanting nothing but metre. I would to heaven that you would give it that requisite yourself; for he who could make the sketch, cannot but be well qualified to finish. But if you will not, I will, provided al-

ways, nevertheless, that God gives me ability; for it will require no common share to do justice to your conceptions. I am much yours,

W. C.

Your little messenger vanished before I could catch him.

Various impediments rendered it hardly possible for Cowper to devote himself as he wished to do to the immediate prosecution of a plan so promising; yet he cherished the idea for some years in his mind, and was particularly pleased (as the reader may recollect from a passage in one of his letters to me) with a prospect that this intended poem might form a portion of a very ample original confederate work, which we hoped to produce in concert with the united powers of some admirable artists, who were justly dear to us both.

All who delight to accompany the genius of Cowper in animated flights of moral contemplation, will deeply regret that he was precluded, by a variety of trouble, from indulging his ardent imagination in a work that would have afforded him such ample scope for all the sweetness and all the sublimity of his spirit. His felicity of description, and his exquisite sensibility; his experience of life, and his sanctity of character, rendered him singularly fit and worthy to delineate the progress of nature in all the different stages of human existence.

A poem of such extent and diversity, happily completed by such a poet, would be a national treasure of infinite value to the country that gave it birth, and I had fervently hoped that England might receive it *from the hand of* Cowper.

With a regret proportioned to those hopes I now part to my readers the minute and imperfect frag of a project so mighty. Yet even the few verses w Cowper had thrown on paper, as the commencem of such a work, will be read with peculiar interes there is truth, as I feel there is, in the following mark of the elder Pliny.

" Suprema opera artificum, imperfectasque Ta " lus, in majori admiratione esse quam perfect " Quippe in iis lineamenta reliqua ipsæque cogitatio " artificum spectantur, atque in lenocinio commend " tionis dolor est:—Manus, cum id agerent extincta " desiderantur."

THE FOUR AGES.

A brief Fragment of an extensive projected Poem.

" I could be well content, allow'd the use
" Of past experience, and the wisdom glean'd
" From worn-out follies, now acknowledg'd such,
" To re-commence life's trial, in the hope
" Of fewer errors, on a second proof;"

Thus, while grey evening lull'd the wind, and call'd
Fresh odours from the shrubb'ry at my side,
Taking my lonely winding walk I mus'd,
And held accustom'd conference with my heart;
When, from within it, thus a voice replied.

" Could'st thou in truth? and art thou taught at
" length
This wisdom, and but this from all the past
s not th[illegible] pardon of thy long arrear,

" Time wasted, violated laws, abuse
" Of talents, judgments, mercies, better far
" Than opportunity vouchsaf'd to err,
" With less excuse, and haply, worse effect?"

I heard, and acquiesced: Then to and fro
Oft pacing, as the mariner his deck,
My grav'lly bounds, from self to human kind
I pass'd, and next consider'd—What is Man?

Knows he his origin?—Can he ascend
By reminiscence to his earliest date?
Slept he in Adam? and in those from him
Through num'rous generations, till he found,
At length, his destin'd moment to be born?
Or was he not, till fashion'd in the womb?
Deep myst'ries both, which schoolmen much ha
toil'd
To unriddle, and have left them myst'ries still.

It is an evil incident to man,
And of the worst, that unexplor'd he leaves
Truths useful, and attainable with ease,
To search forbidden deeps, where myst'ry lies
Not to be solv'd, and useless if it might.
Myst'ries are food for Angels; they digest
With ease, and find them nutriment; but man,
While yet he dwells below, must stoop to glean
His manna from the ground, or starve, and die.

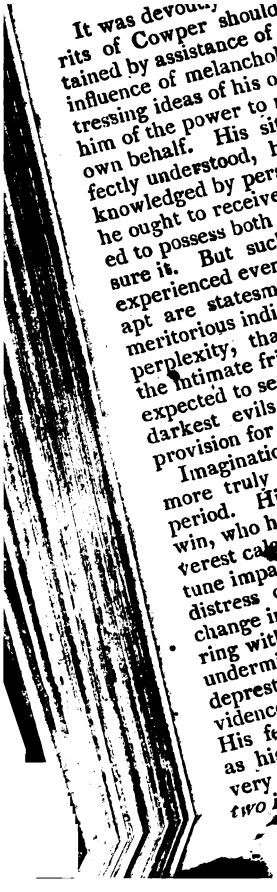
It may, in some degree, alleviate the regret
lovers of poetry must feel that this interesting
was never accomplished by Cowper, to be
that a modern poem on the four Ages of
written by M. Werthmuller, a citizen

translated into Latin verse by Dr. Olstrochi, librarian to the Ambrosian library at Milan. This performance gave rise to another German poem on the four Ages of Women, by M. Zacharie, professor of poetry at Brunswick, an elegant little work, that breathes a spirit of tenderness and piety.

The increasing infirmities of Cowper's aged companion, Mrs. Unwin, his filial solicitude to alleviate her sufferings, and the gathering clouds of deeper despondency that began to settle on his mind in the first month of the year 1794, not only rendered it impossible for him to advance in any great original performance, but, to use his own expressive words in the close of his correspondence with his highly valued friend Mr. Rose, made all composition, either of poetry or prose, impracticable. Writing to that friend in January, 1794, he says, "I have just ability enough to transcribe, which is all that I have to do at present: God knows that I write, at this moment, under a pressure of sadness not to be described."

It was a spectacle that might awaken compassion in the sternest of human characters, to see the health, the comfort, and the little fortune of a man so distinguished by intellectual endowments and by moral excellence, perishing most deplorably. A sight so affecting made many friends of Cowper solicitous and importunate that his declining life should be honourably protected by public munificence. Men of all parties agreed that a pension might be granted to an author of his acknowledged merit with graceful propriety, and we might apply to him, on this topic, the very expressive words which the poet Claudian addresses, on a different occasion, to his favourite hero:

Suffragia Vulgi
Jam tibi detulerant, quidquid mox debuit aula.



It was devou… should be … nature, … rits of Cowper … tained by assistance of this … influence of melancholy not only filled him … tressing ideas of his own fortune, but threatened to ru… him of the power to make any kind of exertion in h… own behalf. His situation and his merits were pe… fectly understood, humanely felt, and honourably … knowledged by persons who, while they declared t… he ought to receive an immediate public support, se… ed to possess both the inclination and the power to … sure it. But such is the difficulty of doing real … experienced even by the great and the powerful, … apt are statesmen to forget the pressing exige… meritorious individuals, in the distractions of … perplexity, that month after month elapsed, in … the intimate friends of Cowper confidently, yet … expected to see him happily rescued from som… darkest evils impending over him, by an ho… provision for life.

Imagination can hardly devise any human … more truly affecting than the state of the p… period. His generous and faithful guardian … win, who had preserved him through seasons … verest calamity, was now, with her faculti… tune impaired, sinking fast into second chi… distress of heart that he felt in behold… change in a companion so justly dear to … ring with his constitutional melancholy, … undermining the exquisite faculties of h… deprest as he was by these complicated … vidence was far from deserting this … His female relation, whose regard h… as his favourite correspondent, now … very nobly to the superintendence o… *two interesting* inhabitants were ren…

trouble, almost incapable of attending to the ordinary offices of life.

Those only who have lived with the superannuated and the melancholy, can properly appreciate the value of such magnanimous friendship, or perfectly apprehend what personal sufferings it must cost the mortal who exerts it, if that mortal has received from nature a frame of compassionate sensibility. The lady to whom I allude has felt but too severely, in her own health, the heavy tax that mortality is forced to pay for a resolute perseverance in such painful duty.

The two last of Cowper's letters to me, that breathe a spirit of mental activity and cheerful friendship, were written in the close of the year 1793 and in the beginning of the next. They arose from an incident that it may be proper to relate before I insert the letters.

On my return from Weston I had given an account of the poet to his old friend Lord Thurlow. That learned and powerful critic, in speaking of Cowper's Homer, happened to declare himself not satisfied with his version of Hector's admirable prayer in caressing his child. We both ventured on new translations of the prayer, which I sent immediately to Cowper, and the following letters will prove with what just and manly freedom of spirit he was at this time able to criticise the composition of his friends and his own.

LETTER XCIV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

December 17, 1793.

Oh Jove! and all ye gods! grant this my son
To prove, like me, pre-eminent in Troy!
In valour such, and firmness of command!

Be he extoll'd, when he returns from fight,
As far his Sire's superior! may he slay
His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,
And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy!

I rose this morning at six o'clock, on purpose to translate this prayer again, and to write to my dear brother. Here you have it, such as it is, not perfectly according to my own liking, but as well as I could make it, and I think better than either your's or Lord Thurlow's. You, with your six lines, have made yourself stiff and ungraceful, and he, with his seven, has produced as good prose as heart can wish, but no poetry at all. A scrupulous attention to the letter has spoiled you both; you have neither the spirit nor the manner of Homer. A portion of both may be found, I believe in my version, but not so much as I could wish: it is better, however, than the printed one. His Lordship's two first lines I cannot very well understand: he seems to me to give a sense of the original that does not belong to it. Hector, I apprehend, does not say, "Grant that he may prove himself my son, and be eminent," &c. but, "Grant that this my son may prove eminent;" which is a material difference. In the latter sense I find the simplicity of an ancient; in the former, that is to say, in the notion of a man proving himself his father's son by similar merit, the finesse and dexterity of a modern. His Lordship too, makes the man who gives the young hero his commendation the person who returns from battle; whereas Homer makes the young hero himself the person, at least if Clarke is a just interpreter, which I suppose is hardly to be disputed.

If my old friend would look into my preface, he would find a principle laid down there, which, *haps, it would not* be easy to invalidate, and

properly attended to, would equally secure a translation from stiffness and from wildness. The principle I mean in this: "Close, but not so close as to be servile; free, but not so free as to be licentious." A superstitious fidelity loses the spirit, and a loose deviation the sense of the translated author—a happy moderation, in either case, is the only possible way of preserving both.

Thus have I disciplined you both, and now, if you please, you may both discipline me. I shall not enter my version in my book till it has gone under your strictures at least, and should you write to the noble critic again, you are welcome to submit it to his. We are three awkward fellows indeed, if we cannot amongst us make a tolerable good translation of six lines of Homer. Adieu. W. C.

LETTER XCV.

To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Weston, January 5, 1794.

MY DEAR HAYLEY,

I have waited, but waited in vain, for a propitious moment when I might give my old friend's objections the consideration they deserve. I shall, at last, be forced to send a vague answer, unworthy to be sent to a person accustomed, like him, to close reasoning and abstruse discussion, for I rise after ill rest, and with a frame of mind perfectly unsuited to the occasion. I sit, too, at the window, for light sake, where I am so cold that my pen slips out of my fingers. First I will give you a translation de novo, of this untranslatable prayer. It is shaped, as nearly as I could contrive to his Lordship's ideas, but I have little hope that it will satisfy him.

Grant Jove, and all ye gods, that this, my son,
Be, as myself have been, illustrious here!
A valiant man! and let him reign in Troy!
May all who witness his return from fight
Hereafter, say—He far excels his sire;
And let him bring back gory trophies, stript
From foes slain by him, to his mother's joy.

Imlac, in Rasselas, says, I forget to whom, "You have convinced me that it is impossible to be a poet." In like manner I might say to his Lordship, you have convinced me that it is impossible to be a translator. To be a translator, on his terms at least, is, I am sure, impossible. On his terms I would defy Homer himself, were he alive, to translate the Paradise Lost into Greek. Yet Milton had Homer much in his eye, when he composed that poem: whereas Homer never thought of me or my translation. There are minutiæ in every language, which, transfused into another, will spoil the version. Such extreme fidelity is, in fact, unfaithful. Such close resemblance takes away all likeness. The original is elegant, easy, natural; the copy is clumsy, constrained, unnatural. To what is this owing? To the adoption of terms not congenial to your purpose; and of a context, such as no man writing an original work would make use of. Homer is every thing that a poet should be. A translation of Homer so made, will be every thing that a translation of Homer should not be; because it will be written in no language under heaven. It will be English, and it will be Greek, and therefore it will be neither. He is the man, whoever he be, (I do not pretend to be that man myself) he is the man best qualified as a translator of Homer, who has drenched, and steeped, and soaked himself in the effusions of his genius, till he has imbibed their colour to the bone, and who, when he is thus dyed through

and through, distinguishing between what is essentially Greek, and what may be habited in English, rejects the former, and is faithful to the latter, as far as the purposes of fine poetry will permit, and no farther. This, I think, may be easily proved. Homer is every where remarkable either for ease, dignity, or energy of expression; for grandeur of conception, and a majestic flow of numbers. If we copy him so closely as to make every one of these excellent properties of his absolutely unattainable, which will certainly be the effect of too close a copy, instead of translating we murder him. Therefore, after all that his Lordship has said, I still hold freedom to be an indispensible. Freedom, I mean, with respect to the expression; freedom so limited, as never to leave behind the *matter;* but at the same time indulged with a sufficient scope to secure the spirit, and as much as possible of the manner. I say as much as possible, because an English manner must differ from a Greek one, in order to be graceful; and for this there is no remedy. Can an ungraceful, awkward translation of Homer be a good one? No: but a graceful, easy, natural, faithful version of him—will not that be a good one? Yes: allow me but this, and I insist upon it that such a one may be produced on my principles, and can be produced on no other.

I have not had time to criticise his Lordship's other version. You know how little time I have for any thing, and can tell him so.

Adieu, my dear brother. I have now tired both you and myself; and, with the love of the whole trio, remain yours ever, W. C.

Reading his Lordship's sentiments over again, I am inclined to think, that in all I have said I have only given him back the same in other words. He disallows

both the absolute *free*, and the absolute *close*: so do I; and, if I understand myself, have said so in my preface. He wishes or recommends a medium, though he will not call it so: so do I; only we express it differently. What is it, then, that we dispute about? My head is not good enough to-day to discover.

These letters were followed by such a silence on the part of my invaluable correspondent, as filled me with the severest apprehensions: because I well knew that, while he retained any glimmerings of mental health, his affectionate spirit was eager to unburthen itself to a friend, of whose sympathy, in all his sufferings, he was perfectly assured. The accounts of him with which I was favoured by his amiable relation (who, shocked as she was by the helpless state and deplorable infirmities of Mrs. Unwin, now resided with these piteous invalids), increased my anxiety for my dejected and silent friend.

Little as the probability appeared that my presence could render him any essential service, I was induced to visit Weston once more, by the following friendly exhortation, in a letter from Cowper's compassionate neighbour, Mr. Greatheed—the clergyman whom Cowper himself had taught me to esteem on our first acquaintance.

From the Reverend Mr. GREATHEED,
To WILLIAM HAYLEY, Esquire.

Newport-Pagnel, April 8, 1794.

DEAR SIR,

Lady Hesketh's correspondence acquainted you [redacted] the melancholy relapse of our

ar friend at Weston; but I am uncertain whether ou know that, in the last fortnight, he has refused food f every kind, except now and then a very small piece f toasted bread, dipped generally in water, sometimes mixed with a little wine. This, her Ladyship informs me, was the case till last Saturday, since when he has eat a little at each family meal. He persists in refusing such medicines as are indispensible to his state of body. In such circumstances his long continuance in life cannot be expected. How devoutly to be wished is the alleviation of his danger and distress! You, dear Sir, who know so well the worth of our beloved and admired friend, sympathize with his affliction, and deprecate his loss, doubtless, in no ordinary degree. You have already most effectually expressed and proved the warmth of your friendship. I cannot think that any thing but your society would have been sufficient, during the infirmity under which his mind has long been oppressed, to have supported him against the shock of Mrs. Unwin's paralytic attack. I am certain that nothing else could have prevailed upon him to undertake the journey to Eartham. You have succeeded where his other friends knew they could not, and where they apprehended no one could. How natural, therefore, nay, how reasonable is it for them to look to you, as most likely to be instrumental, under the blessing of God, for relief in the present distressing and alarming crisis? It is, indeed, scarcely attemptable to ask any person to take such a journey, and involve himself in so melancholy a scene, with an uncertainty of the desired success—increased as the apparent difficulty is by dear Mr. Cowper's aversion to all company, and by poor Mrs. Unwin's mental and bodily infirmities. On these accounts Lady Hesketh does not ask it of you, rejoiced as she would be at your arrival. Am not I,

dear Sir, a very presumptuous person, who, in the face of all opposition, dare do this? I am emboldened by those two powerful supporters, conscience and experience. Was I at Eartham, I would certainly undertake the labour I presume to recommend, for the bare possibility of restoring Mr. Cowper to himself, to his friends, to the public, and to God.

The benevolent wishes of this sincere and fervent advocate for genius and virtue, sinking under calamity, were far from being accomplished by my arrival at Weston. My unhappy friend was too much overwhelmed by his oppressive malady, to show even the least glimmering of satisfaction at the appearance of a guest whom he used to receive with the most lively expressions of affectionate delight.

It is the nature of this tremendous melancholy not only to enshroud and stifle the finest faculties of the mind, but it suspends, and apparently annihilates for a time, the strongest and best-rooted affections of the heart. I had frequent and painful occasion to observe, in this affecting visit to my suffering friend, that he seemed to shrink, at times, from every human creature, except from the gentle voice of my son.

This exception I attributed partly to the peculiar charm which is generally found in the manners of tender ingenuous children, and partly to that uncommon sweetness of character which had inspired Cowper with a degree of parental partiality towards this highly promising youth.

I had hoped, indeed, that his influence, at this season, might be superior to my own, over the dejected spirit of my friend; but though it was so to a consider-

our united efforts to cheer and amuse him
frustrated by his calamitous depression.
hope that my distressing visit to this very
was productive of some little good. My
orded an opportunity to his excellent rela-
Iesketh, who acted at this time as his
uardian, to quit her charge for a few days,
ght have a personal conference concerning
e eminent Dr. Willis. A friendly letter
Thurlow to that celebrated physician had
s attention to the highly interesting suffer-
llis prescribed for Cowper, and saw him
but not with that success and felicity
his medical skill, on another most awful
e source of national delight and exultation.
e extraordinary state of Cowper appeared
th circumstances very unfavourable to his
. The daily sight of a being reduced to
ible imbecility as now overwhelmed Mrs.
in itself, sufficient to plunge a tender spi-
ie melancholy; yet to separate two friends
stomed to minister, with the purest and
benevolence, to the infirmities of each
a measure so pregnant with complicated
that it could not be advised or attempted.
only to palliate the sufferings of each,
t most pitiable condition, and to trust in
that God who had supported them toge-
periods of very dark affliction, though not
plorable as the present.
ierly regarded Weston as a scene that ex-
an nature in a most delightful point of
l applauded there no common triumphs of
f friendship. The contrast that I now con-
s often led me to repeat (with such feel-

ings as those only who have surveyed a contrast so
plorable can perfectly conceive) the following pathe
exclamation in the Sampson Agonistes of Milton:

" God of our Fathers, what is man!
* * * * * * *
" Since such as Thou hast solemnly elected,
" With gifts and graces eminently adorned;
* * * * * * *
" Yet towards these thus dignified, Thou oft,
" Amidst their height of noon,
" Changest thy countenance, and thy hand, with no
" gard
" Of highest favours past
" From Thee on them, or them to Thee of service.
* * * * * * * *
" So deal not with this once thy glorious champion!
" What do I beg? How hast thou dealt already!
" Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
" His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end!"

In the spirit of this prayer every being sympath
who had enjoyed a personal acquaintance with Co
in his happier days, or felt the beneficent influen
his unclouded mind. But, for reasons inscrutab
man apprehension, it was the will of Heaven
this admirable and meritorious invalid should
through a length of sufferings, on which I am ve
from being disposed to detain the attention of my
er:

" Animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit,

I shall therefore only say, that although it h
my lot to be acquainted with affliction in a v

apes, I hardly ever felt the anguish of sympathy with an afflicted friend in a severer degree than during the few weeks that I passed with Cowper at this season of his sufferings. The pain that I endured from this sympathy was, I believe, very visible in my features, and it obtained for me, from his excellent, accomplished neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Courteney, the most delicate and endearing attention; kindness so peculiarly consoling, that I can never cease to remember, and to speak of it with gratitude, while the faculty of memory remains to me.

Indeed, as my own health had been much shattered by a series of troubles, it would probably have sunk utterly under the pressure of this distressing scene, had not some comforts of a very soothing nature been providentially blended with the calamities of my friend.

It was on the twenty-third of April, 1794, in one of those melancholy mornings when his compassionate relation, Lady Hesketh, and myself, were watching together over this dejected sufferer, that a letter from Lord Spencer arrived at Weston, to announce the intended grant of such a pension from his Majesty to Cowper, as would ensure an honourable competence for the residue of his life. This intelligence produced in the friends of the poet very lively emotions of delight, yet blended with pain almost as powerful; for it was painful, in no trifling degree to reflect, that these desirable smiles of good fortune could not impart even a faint glimmering of joy to the dejected invalid.

His friends, however, had the animating hope, that a day would arrive when they might see him receive, with a cheerful and joyful gratitude, this royal recompence for merit universally acknowledged. They knew that, when he recovered his suspended faculties, he must be particularly pleased to find himself chiefly

indebted for his good fortune to the active benevolence of that nobleman who, though not personally acquainted with Cowper, stood, of all his noble friends, the highest in his esteem.

Indeed, it is a justice due to the great to declare, that many of them concurred in promoting, on this occasion, the interest of the poet; and they spoke of him with a truth, and liberality of praise, that did honour both to him and to themselves. It is not often that Majesty has opportunities of granting a reward for literary merit, where the individual who receives it has so clear and unquestionable a title, both to royal munificence and to popular affection. But the heart and spirit of Cowper were eminently loyal and patriotic. He has spoken occasionally of his sovereign in verse, with personal regard, but without a shadow of servility: and his poetry abounds with eloquent and just descriptions of that double duty which an Englishman owes to the crown and to the people.

Perhaps no poet has more clearly and forcibly delineated the respective duties that belong both to subjects and to sovereigns: I allude to an admirable passage on this topic in the fifth book of the Task. It is time to return to the sufferer at Weston. He was unhappily disabled from feeling the favour he received, but an annuity of three hundred a year was graciously secured to him, and rendered payable to his friend Mr. Rose, as the trustee of Cowper.

After devoting a few weeks to Weston, I was under a painful necessity of forcing myself away from my unhappy friend, who, though he appeared to take no pleasure in my society, expressed extreme reluctance to let me depart. I hardly ever endured an hour more dreadfully distressing than the hour in which I left him. Yet the anguish of it would have been greatly

increased, had I been conscious that he was destined to years of this dark depression, and that I should see him no more. I still hoped, from the native vigour of his frame, that, as he had formerly struggled through longer fits of this oppressive malady, his darkened mind would yet emerge from this calamitous eclipse, and shine forth again with new lustre. These hopes were considerably increased at a subsequent period; but, alas! they were delusive: for, although he recovered sufficient command of his faculties to write a few occasional poems, and to retouch his Homer, yet the prospect of his perfect recovery was never realized. I had beheld the poet of unrivalled genius, the sympathetic friend, and the delightful companion, for the last time; and I must now relate the gloomy residue of his life, not from my own personal observation, but from the faithful account of his young kinsman of Norfolk, who devoted himself to the care of this beloved sufferer, and persevered to the last in that delicate and awful charge.

From this time, when I left my unhappy friend at Weston, in the spring of the year 1794, he remained there, under the tender vigilance of his affectionate relation, Lady Hesketh, till the latter end of July, 1795; a long season of the darkest depression, in which the best medical advice, and the influence of time, appeared equally unable to lighten that afflictive burthen which pressed incessantly on his spirits.

At this period it became absolutely necessary to make a great and painful exertion, for the mental relief of the various sufferers at Weston. Mrs. Unwin was sinking very fast into second childhood; the health of Lady Hesketh was much impaired; and the dejection of Cowper was so severe, that a change of

scene was considered as essential to the preservation of his life.

Under circumstances so deplorable, his kinsman at Norfolk most tenderly and generously undertook to conduct the two venerable invalids from Buckinghamshire into Norfolk, and so to regulate their future lives, that every possible expedient might be tried for the recovery of his revered relation.

It is hardly possible for friendship to undertake a charge more delicate and arduous, or to sustain all the pains that must necessarily attend it, with a more constant exertion of gentle fortitude and affectionate fidelity.

The local attachment of Cowper to his favourite village of Weston was strong in no common degree, and rendered his migration from it, though an event of medical necessity, yet a scene of peculiar sufferings. Those who knew his passionate attachment to that pleasant village, how deeply he lamented his absence from it, and how little he gained by a change of situation, though considered as important to the revival of his health, can hardly help regretting that he did not close his days in that favourite scene, and find, at last, according to the wish that he tenderly expresses in the conclusion of the Task,

> " A safe retreat
> " Beneath the turf that he had often trod."

But painful and unprofitable as it proved in a medical point of view, his removal from Weston was very properly considered, by his relations, as an act of imperious duty. He quitted it with affectionate reluctance and perhaps I cannot more forcibly express both the regard of Cowper, and my own regard for that endearing

scene, than by introducing, at this time, when we are taking leave of Weston for ever, a little poem, that I believe to be the last original work which he produced in that beloved abode. The poem describes not his residence, but the increasing infirmities of that aged companion who had so long contributed to his domestic comfort. I question if any language on earth can exhibit a specimen of verse more exquisitely tender.

To MARY.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,
Since first our sky was overcast—
Ah, would that this might be the last,
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disus'd, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly would'st fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playd'st the housewife's part;
And all thy threads, with magic art,
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language utter'd in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet, gently press'd, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st,
That now, at every step thou mov'st
Upheld by two, yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill;
In wint'ry age to feel no chill,
With me, is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

On Tuesday the twenty-eighth of July, 1795, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin removed, under the care and guidance of Mr. Johnson, from Weston to North-Tuddenham, in Norfolk, by a journey of three days, passing through Cambridge without stopping there. In the evening of the first day they rested at the village of Eaton, near St. Neot's. Cowper walked, with his young kinsman, in the church-yard, by moon-light, and spoke of the poet Thomson with more composure of mind than he had discovered for many months.

This conversation was almost his last glimmering of cheerfulness.

At North-Tuddenham the travellers were accommodated with a commodious, untenanted parsonage-house, by the kindness of the Reverend Leonard Shelford. Here they resided till the nineteenth of August. It was the considerate intention of Mr. Johnson not to remove the two invalids immediately to his own house in the town of East-Dereham, lest the situation, in a market-place, should be distressing to the tender spirits of Cowper.

In their new temporary residence they were received by Miss Johnson and Miss Perowne: and here I am irresistably led to remark the kindness of Providence towards Cowper, in his darkest seasons of calamity, by supplying him with attendants peculiarly suited to the exigences of mental dejection.

Miss Perowne is one of those excellent beings whom nature seems to have formed expressly for the purpose of alleviating the sufferings of the afflicted: tenderly vigilant in providing for the wants of sickness, and resolutely firm in administering such relief as the most intelligent compassion can supply. Cowper speedily observed and felt the invaluable virtues of his new attendant; and, during the last years of his life, he honoured her so far as to prefer her personal assistance to that of every individual around him.

Severe as his depressive malady appeared at this period, he was still able to bear considerable exercise; and before he left Tuddenham, he walked, with Mr. Johnson, to the neighbouring village of Mattishall, on a visit to his cousin, Mrs. Bodham. On surveying his own portrait by Abbot, in the house of that lady, he clasped his hands in a paroxysm of pain, and uttered a vehement wish, that his present sensations might be such as they were when that picture was painted. In August, 1795, Mr. Johnson conducted his two invalids to Mundsley, a village on the Norfolk coast, in the hope that a situation by the sea-side might prove salutary and amusing to Cowper. They continued to reside there till October, but without any apparent benefit to the health of the interesting sufferer.

He had long relinquished epistolary intercourse with his most intimate friends, but his tender solicitude to hear some tidings of his favourite Weston induced him, in September, to write a letter to Mr. Buchanan. It shows the severity of his depression, but shows, also, that faint gleams of pleasure could occasionally break through the settled darkness of melancholy.

He begins with a poetical quotation:

'To interpose a little ease
'Let my frail thoughts dally with false surmise!'

"I will forget, for a moment, that to whomsoever I may address myself, a letter from me can no otherwise be welcome than as a curiosity. To you, Sir, I address this, urged to it by extreme penury of employment, and the desire I feel to learn something of what is doing, and has been done, at Weston (my beloved Weston!) since I left it.

"The coldness of these blasts, even in the hottest days, has been such, that, added to the irritation of the salt-spray with which they are always charged, they have occasioned me an inflammation in the eye-lids, which threatened, a few days since, to confine me entirely; but, by absenting myself as much as possible from the beach, and guarding my face with an umbrella, that inconvenience is, in some degree, abated. My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high water approach the coast so closely, that a man, furnished with better eyes than mine, might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at least when the weather is clear and bright, can be pleasanter; which you will easily credit, when I add, that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me.——Gratify me with news of Weston!——If Mr. Gregson and your neighbours, the Courteneys, are there, mention me to them in such terms as you see good. Tell me if my poor birds are living! I never see the herbs I used to give them without a recollection of them, and sometimes am ready to gather them, forgetting that I am not at home.—Pardon this intrusion!

"Mrs. Unwin continues much as usual.

"*Mundsley, Sept. 5*, 1793."

The compassionate and accomplished clergyman to whom this letter is addressed, endeavoured, with great tenderness and ingenuity, to allure his dejected friend to prolong a correspondence that seemed to promise some little alleviation to his melancholy: but that cruel distemper baffled all the various expedients that could be devised to counteract its overwhelming influence.

Much hope was entertained from air and exercise, with a frequent change of scene.—In September Mr. Johnson conducted his kinsman (to the promotion of whose recovery he devoted all the faculties of his affectionate spirit) to take a survey of Dunham-Lodge, a seat that happened to be vacant: it is seated on a high ground, in a park, about four miles from Swaffham. Cowper spoke of it as a house rather too spacious for him, yet such as he was not unwilling to inhabit; a remark that induced Mr. Johnson, at a subsequent period, to become the tenant of this mansion, as a scene more eligible for Cowper than the town of Dereham. This town they also surveyed in their excursion; and, after passing a night there, returned to Mundsley, which they quitted for the season on the seventh of October.

They removed immediately to Dereham; but left it in the course of the month for Dunham-Lodge, which now became their settled residence.

The spirits of Cowper were not sufficiently revived to allow him to resume either his pen or his books; but the kindness of his young kinsman continued to furnish him with inexhaustible amusement, by reading to him, almost incessantly, a series of novels, which, although they did not lead him to converse on what he heard, yet failed not to rivet his attention, and so to prevent his afflicted mind from preying on itself.

In April, 1796, the good, infirm old lady, whose in-

ıities continued to engage the tender attention
:owper, even in his darkest periods of depression,
eived a visit from her daughter and son-in-law,
. and Mrs. Powley. On their departure, Mr. John-
assumed the office which Mrs. Powley had tender-
performed for her venerable parent, and regularly
d a chapter in the Bible every morning to Mrs.
win before she rose. It was the invariable custom
:owper to visit his poor old friend the moment he
l finished his breakfast, and to remain in her apart-
nt while the chapter was read.

n June the pressure of his melancholy appeared to be
ome little degree alleviated, for on Mr. Johnson's re-
ving the edition of Pope's Homer, published by Mr.
ıkefield, Cowper eagerly seized the book, and be-
to read the notes to himself with visible interest.
ey awakened his attention to his own version of Ho-
r. In August he deliberately engaged in a revisal
he whole, and for some time produced almost sixty
v lines a day.

This mental occupation animated all his intimate
nds with a most lively hope of his speedy and per-
: recovery. But autumn repressed the hope that
ımer had excited.

n September the family removed from Dunham
lge to try again the influence of the sea-side, in
ir favourite village of Mundsley.

:owper walked frequently by the sea; but no ap-
ent benefit arose, no mild relief from the incessant
ssure of his melancholy. He had relinquished his
ımer again, and could not yet be induced to resume

Towards the end of October, this interesting family
lisabled invalids, and their affectionate attendants,
ired from the coast to the house of Mr. Johnson, in

Dereham; a house now chosen for their winter residence, as Dunham-Lodge appeared to them too dreary.

The long and exemplary life of Mrs. Unwin was drawing towards a close:—The powers of nature were gradually exhausted, and on the seventeenth of December she ended a troubled existence, distinguished by a sublime spirit of piety and friendship, that shone through long periods of calamity, and continued to glimmer through the distressful twilight of her declining faculties. Her death was uncommonly tranquil. Cowper saw her about half an hour before the moment of expiration, which passed, without a struggle or a groan, as the clock was striking one in the afternoon.

On the morning of that day he said to the servant, who opened the window of his chamber, "Sally, is there life above stairs?" A striking proof of his bestowing incessant attention on the sufferings of his aged friend, although he had long appeared almost totally absorbed in his own.

In the dusk of the evening he attended Mr. Johnson to survey the corpse; and after looking at it a few moments, he started suddenly away, with a vehement but unfinished sentence of passionate sorrow.

He spoke of her no more.

She was buried by torch-light, on the twenty-third of December, in the north aisle of Dereham church; and two of her friends, impressed with a just and deep sense of her extraordinary merit, have raised a marble tablet to her memory, with the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF
MARY,
(Widow of the Reverend MORLEY UNWIN,
Mother of the Reverend WILLIAM CAWTHORNE
UNWIN,)
born at Ely, 1724—buried in this Church, 1796.

'rusting in God, with all her heart and mind,
'his woman prov'd magnanimously kind;
ndur'd affliction's desolating hail,
nd watch'd a poet through misfortune's vale.
er spotless dust, angelic guards, defend!
is the dust of Unwin, Cowper's friend!
hat single title in itself is fame,
or all who read his verse revere her name.

---

he infinitely tender and deep sense of gratitude Cowper, in his seasons of health, invariably mani-:d towards this zealous and faithful guardian of his bled existence; the agonies he suffered on finding under the oppression of a paralytic disease, during first visit to Weston; and all his expressions to me erning the comfort and support that his spirits had ved from her friendship—all made me peculiarly ous to know how he sustained the event of her h. It may be regarded as an instance of provi-ial mercy to this afflicted poet, whose sensibility of t was so wonderfully acute, that his aged friend, e life he had long considered as essential to his was taken from him at a time when the pressure

of his malady, a perpetual low fever, both of body and mind, had, in a great degree, diminished the native energy of his faculties and affections.

Severe as the sufferings of melancholy were to his disordered frame, I am strongly inclined to believe that the anguish of heart which he would otherwise have endured, must have been infinitely more severe. From this anguish he was so far preserved by the marvellous state of his own disturbed health, that, instead of mourning the loss of a person in whose life he had seemed to live, all perception of that loss was mercifully taken from him; and from the moment when hurried away from the inanimate object of his filial attachment, he appeared to have no memory of her having existed, for he never asked a question concerning her funeral, nor ever mentioned her name.

Towards the summer of 1797, his bodily health appeared to improve, but not to such a degree as to restore any comfortable activity to his mind. In June he wrote to me a brief letter, but such as too forcibly expressed the cruelty of his distemper.

The process of digestion never passed regularly in his frame during the years that he resided in Norfolk. Medicine appeared to have little or no influence on his complaint, and his aversion at the sight of it was extreme.

From Asses' milk, of which he began a course on the twenty-first of June in this year, he gained a considerable acquisition of bodily strength, and was enabled to bear an airing in an open carriage before breakfast, with Mr. Johnson.

A depression of spirits, which suspended the studies of a writer so eminently endeared to the public, was considered, by men of piety and learning, as a national misfortune; and several individuals of this description,

1 personally unknown to Cowper, wrote to him
: benevolent hope, that expressions of friendly
, from persons who could be influenced only by
ost laudable motives in bestowing it, might rean-
the dejected spirit of a poet, not sufficiently
ous of the public service that his writings had
red to his country, and of that universal esteem
they had so deservedly secured to their author.
annot think myself authorized to mention the
3 of all who did honour to Cowper and to them-
on this occasion, but I trust the Bishop of Lan-
ill forgive me, if my sentiments of personal re-
towards him induce me to take an affectionate li-
with his name, and to gratify myself by record-
n these pages, a very pleasing example of his li-
attention to the interests of humanity.

endeavoured evangelically to cheer and invigo-
he mind of Cowper; but the depression of that
lered mind was the effect of bodily disorder so
ate, that it received not the slightest relief from
in a season of corporeal health, would have af-
d the most animated gratification to this interest-
valid.

e pressure of his malady had now made him ut-
deaf to the most honourable praise.

had long discontinued the revisal of his Homer;
y the entreaty of his young kinsman, he was per-
d to resume it in September, 1797, and he perse-
l in it, oppressed as he was by indisposition, till
h, 1799. On Friday evening, the eighth of that
h, he completed his revisal of the Odyssey, and
ext morning wrote part of a new preface.

watch over the disordered health of afflicted ge-
and to lead a powerful but oppressed spirit, by
e encouragement, to exert itself in salutary occu-

patien, is an office that requires a very rare union of tenderness, intelligence and fortitude. To contemplate and minister to a great mind, in a state that borders on mental desolation, is like surveying in the midst of a desert, the tottering ruins of palaces and temples, where the faculties of the spectator are almost absorbed in wonder and regret, and where every step is taken with awful apprehension.

It seemed as if Providence had expressly formed the young kinsman of Cowper to prove exactly such a guardian to his declining years as the peculiar exigences of his situation required. I never saw the human being that could, I think, have sustained the delicate and arduous office (in which the inexhaustible virtues of Mr. Johnson persevered to the last) through a period so long, with an equal portion of unvaried tenderness and unshaken fidelity. A man who wanted sensibility would have renounced the duty; and a man endowed with a particle too much of that valuable, though perilous quality, must have felt his own health utterly undermined by an excess of sympathy with the sufferings perpetually in his sight. Mr. Johnson has completely discharged perhaps the most trying of human duties; and, I trust, he will forgive me for this public declaration, that, in his mode of discharging it, he has merited the most cordial esteem from all who love the memory of Cowper. Even a stranger may consider it as a striking proof of his tender dexterity in soothing and guiding the afflicted poet, that he was able to engage him steadily to pursue and finish the revisal and correction of his Homer, during a long period of bodily and mental sufferings, when his troubled mind recoiled from all intercourse with his most intimate friends, and laboured under a morbid abhorrence of all cheerful exertion.

but in deploring the calamity of my friend, and cribing the merit of his affectionate attendant, I st not forget that it is still incumbent on me, as a hful biographer, to notice a few circumstances in the k and distressful years that Cowper had yet to lin- on earth. In the summer of 1798, Mr. Johnson s induced to vary his plan of remaining, for some nths, in the marine village of Mundsley, and thought ıore eligible for the invalid to make frequent visits n Dereham to the coast, passing a week at a time the sea-side.

Cowper, in his Poem on Retirement, seems to inform what his own sentiments were, in a season of health, cerning the regimen most proper for the disease of lancholy.

Virtuous and faithful Heberden, whose skill
Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,
Gives melancholy up to nature's care,
And sends the patient into purer air."

The frequent change of place, and the magnificence narine scenery, produced, at times, a little relief to depressive sensations. On the seventh of June, 8, he surveyed the Light-house at Happisburgh, and ressed some pleasure on beholding, through a teles- e, several ships at a distance. Yet, in his usual k with Mr. Johnson, by the sea-side, he exempli- but too forcibly his own affecting description of me- choly silence.

"That silent tongue
Could give advice, could censure, or commend,
Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend;
Renounc'd alike its office, and its sport,
Its brisker and its graver strains fall short:

" Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
" And, like a summer brook, are past away."

But this description is applicable only in the more oppressive preceding years, for of the summer 1798, Mr. Johnson says, " We had no longer air and exercise alone, but exercise and Homer hand in hand."

On the twenty-fourth of July Cowper had the honour of a visit from a lady for whom he had long entertained affectionate respect, the Dowager Lady Spencer; and it was rather remarkable, that, on the very morning she called upon him, he happened to have begun his revisal of the Odyssey, which he had originally inscribed to her. Such an incident, in an happier season, would have produced a very enlivening effect on his spirits; but, in his present state, it had not even the power to lead him into any free conversation with his amiable visitor.

The only amusement that he appeared to admit without reluctance, was the reading of Mr. Johnson, who, indefatigable in the supply of such amusement had exhausted an immense collection of novels; and, at this period, began reading to the poet his own works. To these he listened also in silence, and heard all his poems recited in order, till the reader arrived at the history of John Gilpin, which he begged not to hear. Mr. Johnson proceeded to his manuscript poems. To these he willingly listened, but made not a single remark on any. In October, 1798, the pressure of his melancholy seemed to be mitigated in some little degree, for he exerted himself so far as to write, without solicitation, to Lady Hesketh; and I insert passages of this letter, because, gloomy as it is, it describes, in a most interesting manner, the sudden attack of his malady, and tends to confirm an opinion that his mental disorder arose from

a scorbutic habit, which, when his perspiration was obstructed, occasioned an unsearchable obstruction in the finer parts of his frame. Such a cause would produce, I apprehend, an effect exactly like what my suffering friend describes in this affecting letter.

DEAR COUSIN,

You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one who, if he even saw them, could receive no delight from them; who has a faint recollection, and so faint as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any.

In one day, in one minute, I should rather have said, she became an universal blank to me, and though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself.

* * * * * * *

Mundsley, October 13, 1798.

On his return from Mundsley to Dereham, in an evening towards the end of October, Cowper, with Miss Perowne and Mr. Johnson, was overturned in a post-chaise. He discovered no terror on the occasion, and escaped without injury from the accident.

In December he received a visit from his highly esteemed friend Sir John Thockmorton; but his malady was, at that time, so oppressive that it rendered him almost insensible to the kind solicitude of friendship.

He still continued to exercise the powers of his as-

tonishing mind. Upon his finishing the revisal of his Homer, in March, 1799, Mr. Johnson endeavoured, in the gentlest manner, to lead him into new literary occupation.

For this purpose, on the eleventh of March, he had before him the paper, containing the commencement of his poem on *The four Ages*. Cowper altered a few lines; he also added a few; but soon observed to his kind attendant, "that it was too great a work for him to attempt in his present situation."

At supper, Mr. Johnson suggested to him several literary projects, that he might execute more easily. He replied, "that he had just thought of six Latin verses, and if he could compose any thing, it must be in pursuing that composition."

The next morning he wrote the six verses he had mentioned, and added a few more, entitling the poem "*Montes glaciales*."

It proved a versification of a circumstance recorded in a newspaper, which had been read to him a few weeks before, without his appearing to notice it. This poem he translated into English verse, on the nineteenth of March, to oblige Miss Perowne.

On the twentieth of March he wrote the stanzas, entitled, *The Cast-away*, founded on an anecdote in Anson's voyage, which his memory suggested to him, although he had not looked into the book for many years.

As this poem is the last original production from the pen of Cowper, I shall introduce it here, persuaded that it will be read with an interest proportioned to the extraordinary pathos of the subject, and the still more extraordinary powers of the poet, whose lyre could sound so forcibly, unsilenced by the gloom of the darkest distemper, that was conducting him, by slow gradations, to the shadow of death.

THE CAST-AWAY.

Obscurest night involv'd the sky;
Th' Atlantic billows roar'd;
When such a destin'd wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.
He lov'd them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the 'whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their out-cast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
And such as storms allow,

The cask, the coop, the floated cord
Delay'd not to bestow.
But he, they knew, nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld:
And so long he, with unspent pow'r
His destiny repell'd:
And ever as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cry'd—"Adieu!"

At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears, by bards or heroes shed,
Alike immortalise the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,

give the melancholy theme
a more enduring date.
misery still delights to trace
'semblance in another's case.

voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
hen, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone;
t I beneath a rougher sea,
id whelm'd in deeper gulphs than he.

---

ust he translated this poem into Latin verse.
er he went, with Miss Perowne and Mr.
to survey a larger house in Dereham, which
red to their present residence, and in which
y were settled in the following December.
h his corporeal strength was now evidently
, the tender persuasion of Mr. Johnson indu-
to amuse his mind with frequent composition.
August and December he produced a number
ations, from various Latin and Greek epi-

new residence he amused himself with trans-
ew fables of Gay into Latin verse. The fa-
a he used to recite as a child, "The hare
y friends," became one of his latest amuse-

erfect ease and spirit with which his transla-
n Gay are written, induce me to print not only
ich he left entire, but even the two verses (for
excellent) with which he was beginning to
another, when increasing maladies obliged
elinquish for ever this elegant occupation.

These Latin fables were all written in January, 1800. Towards the end of that month I had requested him to new-model a passage in his Homer, relating to some figures of Dædalus: on the thirty-first of January I received from him his improved version of the lines in question, written in a firm and delicate hand.

The sight of such writing from my long silent friend inspired me with a lively but too sanguine hope, that I might see him once more restored.

Alas! at this period a complication of new maladies began to threaten his inestimable life; and the neat transcript of his improved verses on the curious monument of ancient sculpture, so gracefully described by Homer, verses which I surveyed as a delightful omen of future letters from a correspondent so inexpressibly dear to me, proved the last effort of his pen.

On the very day that this endearing mark of his kindness reached me, a dropsical appearance in his legs induced Mr. Johnson to have recourse to fresh medical assistance. The beloved invalid was, with great difficulty, persuaded to take the remedies prescribed, and to try the exercise of a post-chaise, an exercise which he could not bear beyond the twenty-second of February.

In March, when his decline became more and more striking, he was visited by Mr. Rose. He hardly expressed any pleasure on the arrival of a friend whom he had so long and so tenderly regarded; yet he showed evident signs of regret on his departure, the sixth of April.

The long calamitous illness and impending death of a darling child precluded me from sharing with Mr. Rose the painful gratification of seeing, once more, the man whose genius and virtues we had once contemplated together, with mutual veneration and delight;

whose approaching dissolution we felt, not only as an irreparable loss to ourselves, but as a national misfortune. On the nineteenth of April, the close of a life so wonderfully chequered, and so universally interesting, appeared to be very near.

On Sunday, the twentieth, he seemed a little revived.

On Monday he appeared dying, but recovered so much as to eat a slight dinner.

Tuesday and Wednesday he grew apparently weaker every hour.

On Thursday he sat up, as usual, in the evening.

Friday, the twenty-fifth, at five in the morning, a deadly change appeared in his features.

He spoke no more.

His last words were uttered in the night:—In rejecting a cordial, he said to Miss Perowne, who had presented it to him, "What can it signify?" Yet, even at this time, he did not seem impressed with any idea of dying, although he conceived that nothing would contribute to his health.

The deplorable inquietude and darkness of his latter years were mercifully terminated by a most gentle and tranquil dissolution. He passed through the awful moments of death so mildly, that although five persons were present, and observing him in his chamber, not one of them perceived him to expire: but he had ceased to breathe about five minutes before five in the afternoon.

On Saturday, the third of May, he was buried in a part of Dereham church, called St. Edmund's Chapel, and the funeral was attended by several of his relations.

He died intestate: his affectionate relation, Lady Hesketh, has fulfilled the office of his administratrix,

and given orders for a monument to his memory where his ashes repose. In the metropolis, I trust, the public affection for an author so eminently deserving, will enable me to make his manuscripts relating to Milton, which are now before me, the means of erecting a cenotaph in his honour, suitable to the dignity of his poetical character, and to the liberality of the nation, that may be justly proud of expressing a parental sense of his merit.

I have regarded my own intimacy with him as a blessing to myself, and the remembrance of it is now endeared to me by the hope that it may enable me to delineate the man and the poet with such fidelity and truth, as may render his remote, and even his future admirers, minutely acquainted with an exemplary being, most worthy to be intimately known and universally beloved.

The person and mind of Cowper seem to have been formed with equal kindness by nature; and it may questioned if she ever bestowed on any man, with fonder prodigality, all the requisites to conciliate affection and to inspire respect.

From his figure, as it first appeared to me, in his sixty-second year, I should imagine that he must have been very comely in his youth; and little had time injured his countenance, since his features expressed, at that period of life, all the powers of his mind and all the sensibility of his heart.

He was of a middle stature, rather strong than delicate in the form of his limbs; the colour of his hair was a light brown, that of his eyes a bluish grey, and his complexion ruddy. In his dress he was neat, but *not finical*; in his diet temperate, and not dainty.

had an air of pensive reserve in his deportment, his extreme shyness sometimes produced in his ers an indescribable mixture of awkwardness and ty: but no being could be more truly graceful, he was in perfect health, and perfectly pleased his society. Towards women, in particular, his viour and conversation were delicate and fascina- n the highest degree.

ture had given him a warm constitution; and had en prosperous in early love, it is probable that he t have enjoyed a more uniform and happy tenor alth. But a disappointment of the heart, arising the cruelty of fortune, threw a cloud on his juve- spirit. Thwarted in love, the native fire of his erament turned impetuously into the kindred nel of devotion. The smothered flames of desire ng with the vapours of constitutional melancholy he fervency of religious zeal, produced altogether irregularity of corporeal sensation, and of mental h, which gave such extraordinary vicissitudes of idour and of darkness to his mortal career, and e Cowper, at times, an idol of the purest admira- and, at times, an object of the sincerest pity.

a sufferer, indeed, no man could be more enti- to compassion, for no man was ever more truly passionate to the sufferings of others. It was that portion of benevolent sensibility in his nature, h endeared him to persons of all ranks, who had rtunities of observing him in private life. The t prince of Conde used to say, "No man is a hero is familiar domestic:" but Cowper was really e. He was beloved and revered with a sort of try in his family; not from any romantic ideas of nagical powers as a poet, but from that evangeli- entleness of manners and purity of conduct which ined the shade of his sequestered life.

I may be suspected of speaking with the fond partiality, the unperceived exaggerations of friendship; but the fear of such censure shall not deter me from bearing my most deliberate testimony to the excellence of him whose memory I revere, and saying, that, as a man, he made, of all men whom I have ever had opportunities to observe so minutely, the nearest approaches to moral perfection. Indeed, a much more experienced judge of mankind, and Cowper's associate in early life, Lord Thurlow, has expressed the same idea of his character; for being once requested to describe him, he replied with that solemn energy of dignified elocution, by which he is accustomed to give a very forcible effect to a few simple words—"Cowper is truly a good man."

His daily habits of study and exercise, his whole domestic life, is so minutely and agreeably delineated in the series of his letters, that it is unnecessary for his biographer to expatiate upon them. I have little occasion, indeed, to dwell on this topic; but let me apply to my young readers a few expressive words of Louis Racine, in addressing to his own son the Life and Letters of his illustrious father.——"*Quand vous l' aurez connu dans sa famille, vous le gouterez mieux, lorsque vous viendrez a le connoitre sur le Parnasse: vous scaurez, pourquoi ses vers sont toujours pleins de Sentimens.*"——I might add, in alluding to a few of his most tender and pathetic letters: "*C'est une simplicite de mœurs si admirable dans un homme tout sentiment, et tout cœur, qui est cause, qu'en copiant pour vous ses lettres, je verse a tous momens des larmes, parcequil me communique la tendresse, dont il etoit rempli.*"——Cowper greatly resembled his eminent and exemplary brothers of Parnassus, Racine and Me-

asio, in the simplicity and tenderness of his domes-
character.
His voice conspired with his features to announce to
who saw and heard him, the extreme sensibility of
heart: and in reading aloud he furnished the chief
ight of those social, enchanting winter evenings,
ich he has described so happily in the fourth book
he Task. He had been taught, by his parents, at
ne, to recite English verse, in the early years of his
ldhood; and acquired considerable applause, as a
ld, in the recital of Gay's popular fable, "The hare
l many friends:" a circumstance that, probably,
l great influence in raising his passion for poetry,
l in giving him a peculiar fondness for the wild per-
uted animal that he converted into a very grateful
nestic companion.
Secluded from the world, as Cowper had long been,
yet retained, in advanced life, uncommon talents
conversation; and his conversation was distinguish-
by mild and benevolent pleasantry, by delicate hu-
ur peculiar to himself, or by a higher tone of seri-
s good sense, and those united charms of a cultivated
nd, which he has himself very happily described, in
awing the colloquial character of a venerable divine.

Grave, without dulness; learned, without pride;
Exact, yet not precise; though meek, keen-eyed;
Who, when occasion justified its use,
Had wit, as bright as ready, to produce;
Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
Or from philosophy's enlighten'd page,
His rich materials, and regale your ear
With strains it was a privilege to hear:
Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,
And his chief glory, was the gospel theme:

"Ambitious not to shine, or to excel,
But to treat justly what he lov'd so well.

Men who withdraw themselves from the ordinary forms of society, whether delicacy of health, or a passion for study, or both united, occasion their retirement from the world, are generally obliged to pay a heavy tax for the privacy they enjoy, in having their habits of life and their temper very darkly misrepresented by the ignorant malice of offended pride. The sweetness and purity of Cowper's real character did not perfectly preserve him from such misrepresentation. Many persons have been misled so far as to suppose him a severe and sour sectary, though gentleness and good nature were among his pre-eminent qualities, and though deliberately attached to the established religion of his country. The reader may recollect a letter to his young kinsman, who was then on the point of taking orders, in which Cowper sufficiently proves his attachment to the church of England; and he speaks so decidedly on the subject, that certainly none of the sectaries have a right to reckon him in their number. He was, however, as his poetry has most elegantly testified, a most ardent friend to liberty, both civil and religious; and his love of freedom induced him to animadvert, with lively indignation, on every officious and oppressive exercise of episcopal authority. Few ministers of the gospel have searched the scripture more diligently than Cowper, and, in his days of health, with a happier effect; for a spirit of evangelical kindness and purity pervaded the whole tenor of his language, and all the conduct of his life.

His infinite good nature, as a literary man, is strikingly displayed in the indulgent condescension with which he gratified two successive clerks of Northamp-

ton, in writing for them their annual copies of mortuary verses. He thought like the amiable Plutarch, that the most ordinary office may be dignified by a benevolent spirit.

In describing himself to his amiable friend, Mr. Park, the engraver, he spoke too slightingly of his own learning; for he was, in truth, a scholar, as any man may fairly be called who is master of four languages besides his own. Cowper read Greek and Latin, French and Italian; but the extraordinary incidents of his life precluded him from indulging himself in a multiplicity of books, and his reading was comformable to the rule of Pliny, "*Non multa, sed multum.*"

He had devoted some time to the pencil, and he mentions his reason for quitting it in the following passage of a letter to the same correspondent.

Weston, 1792.

It was only one year that I gave to drawing, for I found it an employment hurtful to my eyes, which have always been weak and subject to inflammation. I finished my attempts in this way with three small landscapes, which I presented to a lady. These may, perhaps, exist, but I have now no correspondence with the fair proprietor. Except these, there is nothing remaining to show that I ever aspired to such an accomplishment.

The native warmth of Cowper's affections led him to take a particular pleasure in recording the merit with which he was personally acquainted: a remarkable instance of this amiable disposition appears in his condescending to translate the Latin epitaph on his school-master, Dr. Lloyd. Another epitaph on his

cle Mr. Ashley Cowper, I shall insert here, as it splays, in a most pleasing point of view, both the affectionate ardour and modesty of its author.

LINES

'omposed for a Memorial of ASHLEY COWPER, *Esq. immediately after his death, by his Nephew* WILLIAM, *of Weston.*

Farewell! endued with all that could engage
All hearts to love thee, both in youth and age!
In prime of life, for sprightliness enroll'd
Among the gay, yet virtuous as the old;
In life's last stage (Oh blessing rarely found!)
Pleasant as youth, with all its blossoms crown'd;
Through every period of this changeful state
Unchang'd thyself—wise, good, affectionate!

Marble may flatter, and lest this should seem
O'ercharg'd with praises on so dear a theme,
Although thy worth be more than half suppress,
Love shall be satisfied, and veil the rest.

The person whom these verses commemorate was imself an elegant poet, and father of the lady to whom so many of Cowper's letters are addressed in he preceding collection. The reader can hardly fail o recollect the very pathetic manner in which the po- t spoke to the daughter of this gentleman on the death f a parent so justly beloved.

In describing the social and friendly faculties of Cowper, it would be unjust not to bestow particular otice on a talent that he possessed in perfection, and ne that friendship ought especially to honour, as she

is indebted to it for a considerable portion of her most valuable delights: I mean the talent of writing letters.

Melmoth, the elegant translator of Pliny's letters, has observed, in an interesting note to the thirteenth letter of the second book, how highly the art of epistolary writing was esteemed by the Romans, lamenting, at the same time, that our country has not distinguished itself in this branch of literature.

My late accomplished friend, Dr. Warton, has also remarked in his life of Pope, that "in various sorts of composition in which the English have excelled, we have, perhaps, the least claim to excellence in the article of letters of our celebrated countrymen."

Those of Pope are generally thought deficient in that air of perfect ease, that unstudied flow of affection, which gives the highest charm to epistolary writing: but those unaffected graces which the delicate critic wished in vain to find in the letters of Pope, may be found abundant and complete, in the various correspondence of Cowper. He was, indeed, a being of such genuine simplicity and tenderness, so absolute a stranger to artifice and disguise; his affections were so ardent and so pure, that in writing to those he loved he could not fail to show what really passed in his own bosom, and his letters are most faithful representatives of his heart. He could never subscribe to that dangerous and sophistical dogma of Dr. Johnson, in his splenetic disquisition on the letters of Pope, that "friendship has no tendency to secure veracity."

It certainly has such a tendency, and in proportion to the sense and to the goodness of the writer; for a sensible and a good man must rather wish to afford his bosom friend the most accurate knowledge of his real character, than to obtain a precarious increase of regard by any sort of illusion. The great charm of con-

fidential epistolary intercourse to such a man arises from the persuation, that veracity is not dangerous in speaking of his own defects, when he is speaking to a true and a considerate friend.

The letters not intended for the eye of the public have generally obtained the greatest share of popular applause; and for this reason, because such letters display no profusion of studied ornaments, but abound in the simple and powerful attractions of nature and truth.

Letters, indeed, will ever please, when they are frank, confidential conversations on paper between persons of well-principled and highly cultivated minds graceful manners, and of tender affections.

The language of such letters must, of course, h that mixture of ease and elegance peculiarly suite such composition, and most happily exemplified in letters of Cicero and of Cowper.—These two g masters of a perfect epistolary style have both tioned their own excellent and simple rule for atta it—to use only the language of familiar conversat

Cowper's opinion of two English writers, muc mired for the style of their letters, is expressed in following extract from one of his own to Mr. Hill.

"I have been reading Gray's Works, and think him sublime. * * * * I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet, I think equally poignant with the Dean's."

The letters of Gray are admirable, but they appear to me not equal to those of Cowper, either in the graces of simplicity, or in warmth of affection.

The very sweet stanzas that Cowper has written on friendship, would be alone sufficient to prove that his

ınd spirit were most tenderly alive to all the de-
and delight of that inestimable connection. He
deed such a friend himself, as the voice of wis-
escribes, in calling a true friend "the medicine
." and though misfortune precluded him, in his
lays, from the enjoyment of connubial love, and
essional prosperity, he may be esteemed as sin-
happy in this very important consolatory privi-
f human existence; particularly in his friend-
vith that finer part of the creation, whose sensi-
nakes them most able to relish, or to call forth
wers of diffident genius, and to alleviate the
re of mental affliction. It may be questioned if
et on the records of Parnassus ever enjoyed a
ntial intimacy, as Cowper did, with a variety of
plished women, maintaining, at the same time,
nmate innocence of conduct.

eminent as he was, in warmth and vigour of
and affection, the quickness and strength of his
standing were proportioned to the more perile
ments of his mind. Though he had received
nature lively appetites and passions, his reason
hem in the most steady and laudable subjection.
e only internal enemy of his peace and happiness,
is intellect could not subdue, was one tremendous
mysteriously impressed on his fervent imagina-
in a scene of bodily disorder, and at such periods
ring upon his mind with an overwhelming in-
e, which not all the admirable powers of his own
nt upright spirit, nor all the united aids of art
ature, were able to counteract.

ough he was sometimes subject to imaginary
he maintained, in his season of health, a most
animous reliance on the kindness of heaven.
sublime sentiment is forcibly and beautifully ex-

pressed in the following passage, extracted from his correspondence with Mr. Hill.

"I suppose you are sometimes troubled on my account, but you need not. I have no doubt it will be seen, when my days are closed, that I served a master who would not suffer me to want any thing that was good for me. He said to Jacob, 'I will surely do thee good;' and this he said not for his sake only, but for ours also, if we trust in him. This thought relieves me from the greatest part of the distress I should else suffer in my present circumstances, and enables me to sit down peacefully upon the wreck of my fortune."

He also possessed and exerted that becoming fortitude which teaches a man to support, under various trials, the sober respect that he owes to himself. Praise, however exalted, did not intoxicate him, and detraction was unable to poison his pure sense of his own merit: so that he thus escaped an infirmity into which some great and good poets have fallen, an infirmity that was remarkable in Racine, and which I had once occasion to observe and lament in a very eminent departed author of our own country, who complained to me that time had so far depressed his spirits as to take from him all sense of pleasure in public praise, and yet left him acute feelings of pain from public detraction.

Cowper possessed, in his original motives for appearing in the character of a poet, the best possible preservative against this double infelicity of mind.

His predominant desire was to render his poetry an instrument of good to mankind: his love of fame was a secondary passion, and, like all his passions, in perfect subjection to the great principles of religious duty which he made the rule of his life.

: is evident, from the tenor of his correspondence, : he had a lively and a proper relish for praise, :n justly and affectionately bestowed. The quick- ; and the nicety of his feelings, on this delicate ıt, he has displayed in the following letter to a lady, ɔse various talents he very highly esteemed, on re- ·ing her poem, "*The Emigrants*," addressed to in a dedication most worthy of such a patron.

To Mrs. CHARLOTTE SMITH.

Weston, July 25, 1793.

DEAR MADAM,

Many reasons concurred to make impatient for the arrival of your most acceptable ɜent, and among them was the fear lest you should, ıaps, suspect me of tardiness in acknowledging so ıt a favour; a fear that, as often as it prevailed, ressed me exceedingly. At length I have received ınd my little bookseller assures me that he sent it very day he got it. By some mistake, however, waggon brought it instead of the coach, which oc- oned a delay that I could ill afford.

came this morning, about an hour ago: conse- ıtly I have not had time to peruse the poem, gh, you may be sure, I have found enough for the ısal of the dedication. I have, in fact, given it e readings, and in each have found increasing plea-

am a whimsical creature. When I write for the ic, I write, of course, with a desire to please, in r words, to acquire fame, and I labour according- but when I find that I have succeeded, feel myself ned, and ready to shrink from the acquisition.

This I have felt more than once; and when I saw my name at the head of your dedication, I felt it again: but the consummate delicacy of your praise soon convinced me that I might spare my blushes, and that the demand was less upon my modesty than my gratitude. Of that be assured, dear Madam, and of the truest esteem and respect of your most obliged and affectionate humble servant,

WM. COWPER.

P. S. I should have been much grieved to have let slip this opportunity of thanking you for your charming sonnets, and my two most agreeable old friends, Monimia and Orlando.

Cowper felt the full value of applause when conferred by a liberal and a powerful mind; and I had a singularly pleasing opportunity of observing the just sensibility of his nature on this point, by carrying to him, in one of my visits to Weston, a recent newspaper, including the speech of Mr. Fox, in which that accomplished orator had given new lustre to a splendid passage in the Task, by reciting it in parliament. The passage alluded to contains the sublime verses on the destruction of the bastile; verses that were originally composed in the form of a prophecy. The eloquence of the poet and orator united could hardly furnish a perfect description of the double delight which this unexpected honour afforded to the author, and to the good old enthusiastic admirer and cherisher of his talents, Mrs. Unwin. Her feelings were infinitely the most vivid on this agreeable occasion; for the poet, though he truly enjoyed such honourable applause, was ever on his guard against the perils of praise, and had

continually impressed on his own devout spirit, his primary motives of poetical ambition. The mention of these motives, which conduce, as well as his extraordinary powers, to distinguish Cowper in the highest rank of illustrious poets, will naturally lead me to consider him in that point of view, and to examine the difficulties he has surmounted, and the great aims he has accomplished, in his poetical capacity.

Accident, idleness, want, spleen, love, and the passion for fame, have all, in their turns, had such occasional influence over the human faculties, as to induce men of considerable mental powers to devote themselves to the composition of verse: but the poetical character of Cowper appears to have had a much nobler origin. To estimate that character according to its real dignity, we should consider him as a poet formed by the munificence of nature and the decrees of heaven. He seems to have received his rare poetical powers as a gift from Providence, to compensate the pressure of much personal calamity, and to enable him to become, though secluded by irregular health from the worldly business, and from the ordinary pastimes of men, a singular benefactor to mankind.

If we attend to the rise and progress of his works, we shall perceive that such was the predominant aim of this truly philanthropic poet, and that, in despight of his manifold impediments and troubles, heaven graciously enabled him to accomplish the noblest purpose that the sublimest faculties can devise for their own most arduous exercise, and most delightful reward. He had cultivated his native talent for poetry in early life, although the extreme modesty of his nature had restrained him from a public display of his poetical powers. Through many years of mental disquietude and affliction, that powerful talent, which was

destined to burst forth with such unrivalled lustre, seems to have remained in absolute inactivity; but in different seasons of a very long abstinence from poetical exertion, his mind had been engaged in such studies (when health allowed him to study) as form, perhaps, the best possible preparation for great poetical achievements: I mean a fervent application to that book which furnishes the most ample and beneficial aliment to the heart and to the fancy, the book to which Milton and Young were indebted for their poetical sublimity. Cowper, in reading the Bible, admired and studied the eloquence of the prophets. He was particularly charmed with the energy of their language in describing the wrath of the Almighty.

By his zealous attention to the scripture, he incessantly treasured in his own capacious mind those inexhaustible stores of sentiment and expression which enabled him gradually to ascend the purest heights of poetical renown, which rendered him, at last, what he ardently wished to prove—the poet of christianity—the monitor of the world.

It was after a very long and severe fit of mental depression, that, by the friendly request of his faithful associate in affliction, he sought, in poetical composition of considerable extent, a salutary exercise for a mind formed for the most active and beneficent exertion, though occasionally subject to an utter suspension of its admirable powers. I have already mentioned the circumstance, communicated to me by Mrs. Unwin, concerning the first extensive poem, in point of time, that appears in the first volume of Cowper.

"The Progress of Error" seems the least attractive among the several admonitory poems of the collection, and we judge from it, that even the genius of Cowper required the frequent habit of writing verse to

y itself to advantage, Yet even this poem, in
he is said to have made the first serious trial of
ng suspended talent, has passages of exquisite
/. Take, for example, his portrait of Innocence
olly, painted with the delicate simplicity and ten-
ss of Corregio.

h baby-featur'd, and of infant size,
w'd from a distance, and with heedless eyes,
ly and Innocence are so alike,
e diff'rence, though essential, fails to strike:
: Folly ever has a vacant stare,
simp'ring countenance, a trifling air:
t Innocence, sedate, serene, erect,
lights us by engaging our respect.

is poem also discovers, in some degree, that won-
l combination of very different powers, which the
quent works of Cowper display in delightful pro-
n.

ıe affectionate and accomplished biographer of
s has fallen (only, I apprehend, from a casual slip
emory) into a sort of silent injustice towards Cow-
when in speaking of the few poets "who have at
excelled in humour, in tenderness, and in sub-
y," he affirms that "this praise, in modern
s, is only due to Ariosto, to Shakspeare, and per-
to Voltaire."

ecollection, I am confident, will rapidly convince
a consummate judge of poetical merit, that the
ts of Cowper contain many examples of that triple
llence, which is assuredly most rare, and which
masterly biographer very justly attributes to the
vellous peasant whose life and genius he has so
ngly and so honourably described. But to return

to the poem of which I was speaking: it proves that Cowper could occasionally blend the moral humour of Hogarth, with the tenderness and sublimity that belong to artists of a superior rank. The portraits of the English travellers and the foreign Abbe, that are sketched in this poem, are all touched with the spirit of Hogarth.

The Progress of Error contains also some of those happy verses of serious morality, in which Cowper excelled; verses that, expressing a simple truth with perfect grace and precision, rapidly fix themselves, and with a lasting proverbial influence, on the memory. I will cite only two detached couplets in proof of my assertion.

None sends his arrow to the mark in view,
Whose hand is feeble, or his aim untrue.
Call'd to the temple of impure delight;
He that abstains, and he alone does right.

As soon as Cowper found that the composition of moral verse was medicinal to his own mind, he seems to have formed the noble resolution of making his works an universal medicine for the various mental infirmities of the world. His own ideas on this subject are perfectly expressed in the following passage from his first letter to his friend Mr. Bull, who began his correspondence with the poet by a letter of praise, on the publication of his first volume.

March 24, 1782.

* * * * * *

"Your letter gave me great pleasure, both as a testimony of your approbation and of your regard. I wrote in hopes of pleasing you, and such as you, and though I must confess that, at the same time, I cast a side-

long glance at the good-liking of the world at large, I believe I can say it was more for the sake of their advantage and instruction than their praise. They are children; if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey. If my book is so far honoured as to be made the vehicle of true knowledge to any that are ignorant, I shall rejoice, and do already rejoice, that it has procured me a proof of your esteem."

It was probably this idea of tinging the rim of the cup with honey (an expression used by Lucretius and by Tasso) which induced Cowper to place in the front of his volume the poem entitled Table Talk. The title has in itself an inviting appearance, and the lively desultory spirit of the composition sufficiently vindicates the propriety of the title. It is a rapid and animated descant on a variety of interesting topics. The brief tale from that humorous and high-spirited Spaniard, Quevedo, is admirably told, and I have frequently heard it recited as a most striking example of Cowper's talent for such narration, by a very dear departed friend of the most delicate discernment.

The poet, in this outset of his moral enterprise, bestows a graceful compliment on his sovereign—

"His life a lesson to the land he sways."

And he judged it right to annex to this high compliment such a profession of his own independent spirit as every ingenuous mind must delight to observe from the pen of a poet, when his life and his writings reflect a reciprocal lustre on each other.

A bribe!
The worth of his three kingdoms I defy
To lure me to the baseness of a lie;

And of all lies (be that one poet's boast!)
The lie that flatters I abhor the most.

This professed abhorrence of adulation was uttered in the real spirit of simplicity and truth. No poet was ever more perfectly free from that base propensity, which is sometimes erroneously imputed to the poetical tribe, who, from their peculiar warmth of sensation, are often thought to flatter, when they speak only their genuine feelings.

Perhaps Cowper sometimes indulged himself in a very different weakness, if I may call the little excesses of a generous independent pride by so harsh an appellation.

It is incumbent on me to explain the petty foible of my friend to which I allude. Having composed, from the impulse of his heart, his little poem on the elevation of his intimate companion in former days, Lord Thurlow, to the dignity of Chancellor, he condemned it to lie in long concealment, from an apprehension that, although he knew the praise to be just, it might be supposed to flow from a sordid and selfish solicitude to derive some advantage from the recent grandeur of a man whom he had once cordially loved, but whom their different destinies had made for many years almost a personal stranger to the poet, though never an alien to his heart.

But to resume the few remarks I wish to make on the Poem of Table Talk. It contains what Cowper could readily command, a great variety of style. Much of the poem has the manner of Churchill, and particularly the lines that exhibit a strong character of that popular and powerful satirist; a poet whose highest excellence Cowper possessed, with many more refined attractions, which the energetic, but coarse spirit

of that modern Juvenal could not attain. Towards the close of Table Talk, the poet introduces, very happily, what he had proposed to himself as the main scope of his own poetical labours—the service that a poet may render to the great interest of religion. This he describes in a strain of sublimity, and constrasts it very ably with inferior objects of poetical ambition.

From this poem of infinite diversity it would be easy to select specimens of almost every excellence that can be found in a work of this nature. Truth, however, obliges me to observe, that this admirable prelude to the collected poetry of Cowper has a weak and ungraceful conclusion.

The four poems, entitled, Truth, Expostulation, Hope, and Charity, are four Christian exhortations to piety, which may be thought tedious and dull by readers who have no relish for devotional eloquence, or who, however blest with a serious sense of religion, have too hastily admitted the very strange and groundless dogma of Dr. Johnson, that "contemplative piety cannot be poetical;" a position resembling that of the ancient sophist, who denied the existence of motion, and whose indignant hearer answered him by walking immediately in his sight. With such simple and forcible refutation, the genius of Cowper replies to the paradoxical pedantry of a critic, whose high intellectual powers, when he exerts and exhausts them to command and illuminate the expansive sphere of poetry, delight and disgust his readers alternately, by a frequent mixture of gigantic force and dwarfish imbecility. His weak, though solemn sophistry on this subject is completely refuted by the poems of Cowper, because contemplative piety, which, according to the critic's assertion, cannot be poetical, is, in truth, one

of the most powerful charms by which this devout poet accomplishes his poetical enchantment.

But to return to the four sacred poems that lead me to this remark. That on Truth exhibits the author's singular talent of blending the humorous and the sublime. In his portrait of the sanctified prude, he is at once the copyist and thecompeer of Hogarth: in his picture of cheerful piety, and true Christian freedom, he soars to a species of excellence that the pencil of Hogarth could not command.

Expostulation flows in a more even tenor of sublime admonition: it was founded on a sermon preached by the author's zealous and eloquent friend, Mr. Newton, and contains the following admirable description of what the clergy ought to be.

The priestly brotherhood, devout, sincere,
From mean self-interest and ambition clear,
Their hope in heaven, servility their scorn,
Prompt to persuade, expostulate, and warn;
Their wisdom pure and given them from above;
Their usefulness insur'd by zeal and love;
As meek as the man Moses, and withal
As bold as, in Agrippa's presence, Paul;
Should fly the world's contaminating touch,
Holy and unpolluted; are thine such?

I will not transcribe the closing couplet, because it appears to me one of the few passages in the poet where the warm current of his zeal hurried him into a hasty expression of asperity, not in unison with the native and habitual candour of his contemplative mind.

The Poem on Hope, although the poet means only to describe

"That hope which can alone exclude despair,"

has a gay diversity of colouring, and the dialogue introduced is written with exquisite pleasantry. The great and constant aim of the author is expressed in his motto,

"Doceas iter, et sacra ostia pandas."

In the commencement of his Poem on Charity, the author renders a just and eloquent tribute to the humanity of Captain Cook; and in the progress of it bursts into an animated and graceful eulogy on Howard, the visitor of prisons. The sentiments that Cowper endeavours to impress on the heart of his reader, in this series of devotional poems, are drawn from the great fountain of intellectual purity, the gospel; and to the poet, in his character of a Christian Monitor, we may justly and gratefully apply the following verses from this poem on Charity.

When one that holds communion with the skies
Has fill'd his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.

In the extensive and admirably varied Poem on Conversation, the poet shines as a teacher of manners as well as of morality and religion.

It is remarkable that, in this work, he is particularly severe on what he considered as his own peculiar defect, that excess of diffidence, that insurmountable shyness, which is so apt to freeze the current of English conversation.

Our sensibilities are so acute,
The fear of being silent makes us mute.

True modesty is a discerning grace,
And only blushes in the proper place;
But counterfeit is blind, and skulks through fear,
Where 'tis a shame to be asham'd t' appear;
Humility the parent of the first,
The last by vanity produc'd and nurs'd.
The circle form'd, we sit, in silent state,
Like figures drawn upon a dial-plate.
Yes Ma'am, and no Ma'am, utter'd softly, show,
Every five minutes, how the minutes go.

This poem abounds with much admirable description, both serious and comic. The portrait of the splenetic man is, perhaps, the most highly finished example of comic power; and the scene of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, is a perfect model of solemn and graceful simplicity. I cannot cease to speak of this very attractive poem without observing, that the author has inserted in it two passages intended to obviate such objections as he conceived most likely to be urged against the tendency of his writings. He was aware that the light and vain might suppose him a gloomy fanatic, and as a preservative against such injurious misconception, he composed the following just and animated lines.

What is fanatic frenzy? scorn'd so much!
And dreaded more than a contagious touch.
I grant it dangerous, and approve your fear;
That fire is catching if you draw too near;
But sage observers oft mistakes the flame,
And give true piety that odious name.

He then draws an excellent picture of real fanatism, and such a picture as could not have been painted by one of her votaries.
Again, to vindicate the cheerful tendency of the lesson he wished to inculcate, he exclaims,

— Let no man charge me, that I mean
To clothe in sables every social scene,
And give good company a face severe,
As if they met around a father's bier!

I will add a few verses from the close of the poem, because they appear a just description of his own eloquence, both in poetry and conversation, when he conversed with those he loved—He is speaking of a character improved by a proper sense of religion.

Thus touch'd, the tongue receives a sacred cure
For all that was absurd, profhane, impure:
Held within modest bounds, the tide of speech
Pursues the course that truth and nature teach;
Where'er it winds, the salutary stream,
Brightly and fresh, enriches every theme;
While all the happy man possess'd before,
The gift of nature, or the classic store,
Is made subservient to the grand design
For which Heaven form'd the faculty divine.

The poem on Retirement may be a delightful and useful lesson to those who wish to enjoy and improve a condition of life which is generally coveted by all in the period of their existence. The different votaries of retirement are very happily described; and the portrait of Melancholy, in particular, has all that mild and forcible excellence, derived from the faithful

delineation of nature; for the poet described hi when under the overwhelming pressure of that gri malady. The caution to the lover is expressed all the delicacy and force of the most friendly adv tion; and the fair sex are too much obliged to th derness of the poet to resent his bold assertion, they are not entitled to absolute adoration.

This poem contains several of those exquisite verbial couplets that I have noticed on a former sion. Verses like the following are fit to be trea in the heart of every man.

An idler is a watch that wants both hands;
As useless if it goes, as when it stands.

Absence of occupation is not rest;
A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest.

Religion does not censure, or exclude
Unnumber'd pleasures, harmlessly pursued.

The very sweet close of this poem I will not upon at present, because I mean to notice it in co ing, as I advance, the most remarkable passages poet, in which he has spoken of himself. I must however, bid adieu to his first volume for the pr without observing that, of the smaller poems a end of it, three are eminently happy, both in sent and expression; the verses assigned to Alexande kirk, the Winter Nosegay, and Mutual Forbeara

It may, perhaps, console some future diffident on his first appearance in public, if his merits h to be depreciated by the presumptuous sentence

riodical criticism; it may console him to be informed, that when the first volume of Cowper was originally published, one of the critical journals of his day represented him as a good devout gentleman, without a particle of true poetical genius. To this very curious decision we may apply with a pleasant stroke of poetical justice, the following couplet from the Book so sagaciously described.

The moles and bats, in full assembly, find,
On special search, the keen-eyed eagle blind.

But to those who were inclined to deny his title to the rank and dignity of a poet, Cowper made the best of all possible replies, by publishing a poem which rapidly and justly became a prime favourite with every poetical reader.

In his *Task*, he not only surpassed all his former compositions, but executed an extensive work, of such original and diversified excellence, that, as it arose without the aid of any model, so it will probably remain for ever unequalled by a succession of imitators.

Unde nil majus generatur ipso,
Nec viget quicquam simile aut secundum.

The Task may be called a bird's-eye view of human life. It is a minute and extensive survey of every thing most interesting to the reason, to the fancy, and to the affections of man. It exhibits his pleasures and his pains, his pastimes and his business, his folly and his wisdom, his dangers and his duties, all with such exquisite facility and force of expression, with such grace and dignity of sentiment, that rational beings, who wish to render themselves more amiable and more

happy, can hardly be more advantageously employed than in frequent perusal of the Task.

" O how fayre fruits may you to mortal men
" From Wisdom's garden give! How many may
" By you the wiser and the better prove!"

To apply three verses, of singular simplicity, from Nicholas Grimoald, (one of the earliest writers of English blank verse) to the poet who has added such a large increase of variegated lustre to that species of composition.

The Task, beginning with all the peaceful attractions of sportive gaiety, rises to the most solemn and awful grandeur, to the highest strain of religious solemnity. Its frequent variation of tone is masterly in the greatest degree, and the main spell of that inexhaustible enchantment which hurries the reader through a flowery maze of many thousand verses, without allowing him to feel a moment of languor or fatigue. Perhaps no author, ancient or modern, ever possessed, so completely as Cowper, the nice art of passing, by the most delicate transition, from subjects to subjects that might otherwise seem but little or not at all allied to each other, the rare talent

" Happily to steer
" From grave to gay, from lively to severe."

The Task may be compared to one of the grand fabrics of musical contrivance, where a single work contains a vast variety of power for producing such harmony and delight as might be expected to arise from a large collection of instruments. The auditor is charmed by the vicissitudes of partial excellence, and aston-

y the magnificent compass of a single produc-
ut the supreme attraction of the Task arises
at conviction, which all who delight in it can-
to feel, that the poet, however pre-eminent in
tual powers, must have been equally pre-emi-
tender benevolence of heart. His reader
im as a sympathetic friend, and blesses him
valuable instructor.
truth of this remark may be illustrated by the
g verses, which I insert with pleasure, al-
I know not their author, as an elegant proof of
ection in a stranger, which the poetry of Cow-
such a peculiar tendency to inspire.

---

eeing a Sketch of COWPER by Lawrence.

ard, whose mind, thus pictur'd in thy face,
ery feature spreads a nobler grace;
keen, but soften'd eye appears to dart
of pity through the human heart;
rch the secrets of man's inward frame;
p with sorrow o'er his guilt and shame.
ard, with whom, in sympathy of choice,
times left the world, at nature's voice,
the song that all her creatures raise,
ol forth their great Creator's praise:
apt in visions of immortal day,
az'd on Truth in Zion's heavenly way.
ard, may this thine image, all I know,
r may, of Cowper's form below,
one who views it, with a Christian's love,
k, and find thee in the realms above.

Persons who estimate poetical talents more from the arbitrary dictates of established criticism than from their own feelings, may be disposed to exclude Cowper from the highest rank of poets, because he has written no original work of the epic form:—He has constructed no fable; he has described no great action, accomplished by a variety of characters, derived either from history or invention. But if the great epic poets of all nations were assembled to give their suffrages concerning the rank to be assigned to Cowper as a poet, I am persuaded they would address him to this effect: "We are proud to receive you as a brother, because, if the form of your composition is different from ours, you are certainly equal to the noblest of our fraternity in the scope and effect of your verse. You are so truly a poet by the munificence of nature, that she seems to have given you an exclusive faculty, (resembling the fabulous faculty of Midas relating to gold, though given to you for beneficial purposes alone) the faculty of turning whatever you touch to a fit subject for poetry: you are the poet of familiar life: but you paint it with such felicity of design and execution, that, as long as verse is valued upon earth as a vehicle of instruction and delight, you must and ought to be revered and beloved as pre-eminently instructive and delightful: by having accomplished, with equal felicity, the two great and arduous objects of your art, you have deserved to be the most popular of poets."

Such, I apprehend, would be the praise which all the perfect judges of his poetry, could they be selected from every age, past, present, and future, would unanimously bestow on the genius of Cowper. Yet the Task, though, taken altogether, it is, perhaps, the most attractive poem that ever was produced, and such as required the rarest assemblage of truly poeti-

oal powers for its production, bears, like every wor from a human hand, that certain mark of a mortal agent—defect. Even the partiality of friendship must allow that the Task has its blemishes, and the greatest of them is that tone of asperity in reproof, which I am persuaded its gentle and benevolent author caught unconsciously from his frequent perusal of the prophets. The severe invective against the commemoration of Handel is the most striking instance of the asperity to which I allude, and it awakened the displeasure of a poetical lady, whose displeasure Cowper, of all men, would have been most truly sorry to have excited, had he been as well acquainted with the charms of her conversation as he was with her literary talents.

Cowper's eminent contemporary, the favourite poet of Scotland, seems to have felt, with fraternal sensibility, both the beauties and the blemishes of this most celebrated work.

"Is not the Task a glorious poem?" says Burns, in one of his letters to his accomplished and generous friend, Mrs. Dunlop: "the religion of the Task, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and nature, the religion that exalts, that ennobles man."

Though Cowper occasionally caught a certain air of Calvinistic austerity, he had not a particle of Calvin's intolerance in his heart. He could never have occasioned the cruel death of a Servetus. Indulgence and good nature were the poet's predominant qualities, and their influence was such, that, although his extraordinary talents for satire threw perpetual temptation in his way, he declined the temptation: he chose not to be a satirist, but a monitor. *Vitae sanctitas summa, comitas par; insectatur vitia non homines.*" He wisely observed that the most dignified satirists are lit-

tle better than mere beadles of Parnassus. He considered satire rather as the bane than glory both of Dryden and of Pope. In truth, though many an upright man has, in a fit of honest moral indignation, begun to write satire, in a persuasion that such works would benefit the world and do honour to himself, yet even satirists of this higher order have generally found that they did little more than gratify the common malignity of the world, and suffer angry and blind prejudice and passions to insinuate themselves imperceptibly into their nobler purposes, disfiguring their works and disquieting their lives. Such, perhaps, was the natural train of reflection that suggested to Boileau the admirable verse in which he feelingly and candidly condemns the path that he had himself pursued—

" C'est un mauvais metier que celui de medire."

Cowper felt the truth of this maxim so forcibly, that in his Poem on Charity he has turned the sharpest weapons of satire against the satirists themselves.

Their acrid temper turns, as soon as stirr'd
The milk of their good purpose all to curd;
Their zeal begotten as their works rehearse,
By lean despair upon an empty purse,
The wild assassins start into the street,
Prepar'd to poignard whomsoe'er they meet.

These lines are alone sufficient to prove that Cowper could occasionally assume the utmost severity of invective; yet nature formed him to delight in exhortation more than in reproof; and hence he justly describes himself, in his true monitory character, in the verses that very sweetly terminate his instructive Poem on Retirement.

Content, if, thus sequester'd, I may raise
A monitor's, though not a poet's praise;
And while I teach an art too little known,
To close life wisely, may not waste my own.

When a poet has nobly entitled himself to the esteem and affection of his readers, the most fastidious of them can hardly be inclined to censure him as an egotist, if he takes more than one occasion to draw his own portrait. Few passages in Horace are read with more pleasure than the verses in which he gives a circumstantial account of himself. This reflection induces me to add a few lines from the Task, in which the poet has delineated his own situation exactly in that point of view which must be most pleasing to those who most feel an interest in his lot.

The more we have sympathised in his afflictions, the more we may rejoice in recollecting that he had seasons of felicity, which he, in some measure, makes our own by the delightful fidelity of his description.

"Had I the choice of sublunary good,
What could I wish that I possess not here?
Health, leisure, means t' improve it, friendship, peace,
No loose or wanton, though a wand'ring muse,
And constant occupation without care.
Thus bless'd, I draw a picture of that bliss;
Hopeless, indeed, that dissipated minds,
And profligate abusers of a world
Created fair so much in vain for them,
Should seek the guiltless joys that I describe,
Allur'd by my report;—but sure, no less,
That, self-condemn'd, they must neglect the prize,
And what they will not taste must yet approve

What we admire we praise, and when we praise,
Advance it into notice, that its worth
Acknowledg'd, others may admire it too:
I therefore recommend, though at the risk
Of popular disgust, yet boldly still,
The cause of Piety, and sacred Truth,
And Virtue, and those scenes which God ordain'd
Should best secure them, and promote them most;
Scenes that I love, and with regret perceive
Forsaken, or through folly not enjoy'd."

Indeed, the great and rare art of enjoying life, iff its purest and sublimest delights, is what this beneficent poet appears most anxious to communicate, and impress on the heart and soul of his reader. Witness that most exquisite passage of the Task, where he teaches the pensive student, who contemplates the face of earth, to survey the works of his Maker with a tender transport of filial exhortation.

"He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and though poor, perhaps, compar'd
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scen'ry all his own.
His are the mountains, and the vallies his,
And the resplendent rivers: His to enjoy,
With a propriety that none can feel,
But, who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—My father them made all!
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of int'rest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love

That plann'd and built, and still upholds a world
So cloath'd with beauty for rebellious man?
Yes—ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot; but ye will not find
In feast, or in the chace, in song, or dance,
A liberty like his, who, unimpeach'd
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than you."

I believe the happiest hours of Cowper's life were those in which he was engaged on this noble poem; and as his happiness was, in a great measure, the fruit of his occupation, it is the more to be regretted that some incident, propitious to poetry, did not engage his active spirit a second time in the construction of a great original work.

There was a time, indeed, when his zealous and much regarded friend and neighbour, Mr. Greatheed, most kindly exhorted him to such an enterprise: an anecdote that I seize this opportunity of recording in the words of that gentleman.

"Homer being completely translated and committed to the press, I endeavoured to urge upon Mr. Cowper's attention the idea of a British epic, and would have recommended to him the reign of Alfred, the brightest ornament of the English throne, as one of the most eventful periods of our history. He discovered reluctance to the undertaking, and, to the best of my recollection, principally objected to the difficulties attending the introduction of a suitable machinery under the Christian dispensation. He pointed out the absurdities of Tasso, and the deficiency of Glover in this re-

spect, and thought that Milton had occupied the only epic ground fit for a Christian poet."

Cowper would probably have thought otherwise on such a suggestion, had it been pressed upon his fancy in a more propitious season of his life, before his spirit was harassed by many troubles which attended him during the latter years that he bestowed upon Homer, and above all, by the enfeebled health of Mrs. Unwin, to which he gratefully devoted such incessant attention as must have inevitably impeded any great mental enterprise, even if his fervid imagination had been happily struck with any less obvious and more promising subject for epic song. Had he engaged in such an enterprise at a favourable season of his life, I am persuaded he would have enriched the literature of his country with a composition more valuable than his version of Homer, allowing to that version as high a value as translation can boast.

He possessed all the requisites for the happiest accomplishment of the most arduous original work—fancy, judgment, and taste; all of the highest order, and in union so admirable that they heightened the powers of each other. He was singularly exempt from the two great sources of literary, and, indeed, of moral imperfections—negligence and affectation. From the first he was secured by a modest sense of his own abilities, united to a spirit of application, like the alacrity of Cæsar—

"Nil actum reputans, si quid superesset agendum."

From affectation of every kind he was perpetually preserved by a majestic simplicity of mind, never seduced by false splendour, and most feelingly alive to all the graces of truth. But with the rarest combina-

of different faculties for the successful execution of great poetical work, his tender and modest genius, lime as it was, wanted the animating voice of ndship to raise it into confident exertion. The ık would not have been written without the inspi- ; voice of Lady Austen. The solemn and sage spi- of Numa required the inspiration of his Egeria.

— Sic sacra Numæ ritusque colendos
litis Aricino dictabat nympha sub antro.

he great pleasure that Cowper felt in the conver- on of accomplished women, inspired him with that cate vivacity with which he was accustomed to ex- ss his gratitude for a variety of little occasional pre- s that he received from his female friends.
r. Johnson has said surlily and unjustly of Milton, : "he never learnt the art of doing little things with ce." But in truth, poets who possess such exqui- feelings, and such powers of language, as belonged Milton and to Cowper, can hardly fail to give ele- ce and grace to their poetical trifles, whenever af- ion leads them to trifle in verse. Cowper, whose ations of gratitude were singularly strong, was re- kably happy in those sprightly poetical compli- nts which he often addressed to ladies, in return for e highly welcome, though trivial gift, endeared to affectionate spirit by his regard for the giver. To trate this very amiable part of his character, I l here insert a few of these animated and graceful es.

To my Cousin ANNE BODHAM,

On receiving from her a Net-work Purse made by herself, May 4, 1793.

My gentle Anne, whom heretofore,
When I was young, and thou no more
Than plaything for a nurse,
I danced and fondled on my knee,
A kitten both in size and glee!
I thank thee for my Purse:

Gold pays the worth of all things here;
But not of love;—that gem's too dear
For richest rogues to win it;
I, therefore, as a proof of love,
Esteem thy present far above
The best things kept within it.

To Mrs. KING,

On her kind Present to the Author—a Patch-work Counterpane of her own making.

The bard, if e'er he feel at all,
Must sure be quicken'd by a call
Both on his heart and head,
To pay, with tuneful thanks, the care
And kindness of a lady fair,
Who deigns to deck his bed.

A bed like this, in ancient time,
On Ida's barren top sublime,
(As Homer's epic shows)
Compos'd of sweetest vernal flow'rs,
Without the aid of sun or show'rs,
For Jove and Juno rose.

Less beautiful, however gay,
Is that, which in the scorching day
Receives the weary swain;
Who, laying his long scythe aside,
Sleeps on some bank, with daisies pied,
'Till rous'd to toil again.

What labours of the loom I see!
Looms numberless have groan'd for me:
Should ev'ry maiden come
To scramble for the patch that bears
The impress of the robe she wears,
The bell would toll for some.

And O! what havoc would ensue!
This bright display of ev'ry hue
All in a moment fled!
As if a storm should strip the bowers
Of all their tendrils, leaves, and flowers,
Each pocketing a shred.

Thanks, then, to ev'ry gentle fair
Who will not come to pick me bare
As bird of borrow'd feather;
And thanks to one, above them all,
The gentle fair of Pirtenhall,
Who put THE WHOLE TOGETHER.

GRATITUDE.

Addressed to Lady Hesketh.

This cap, that so stately appears,
With ribbon-bound tassel on high,
Which seems, by the crest that it rears,
Ambitious of brushing the sky:
This cap to my cousin I owe,
She gave it, and gave me beside,
Wreath'd into an elegant bow,
The ribbon with which it is tied.

This wheel-footed studying chair,
Contriv'd both for toil and repose,
Wide-elbow'd, and wadded with hair,
In which I both scribble and doze,
Bright-studded to dazzle the eyes,
And rival in lustre of that,
In which, or astronomy lies,
Fair Cassiopeia sat.

These carpets, so soft to the foot,
Caledonia's traffic and pride,
Oh spare them, ye knights of the boot!
Escap'd from a cross-country ride!
This table and mirror within,
Secure from collision and dust,
At which I oft shave cheek and chin,
And periwig nicely adjust.

This moveable structure of shelves,
For its beauty admired and its use,
And charged with octavos and twelves,
The gayest I had to produce,

Where, flaming in scarlet and gold,
My poems enchanted I view,
And hope, in due time, to behold
My Iliad and Odyssey too.

This china, that decks the alcove,
Which here people call a beaufette,
But what the gods call it above
Has ne'er been reveal'd to us yet:
These curtains, that keep the room warm,
Or cool, as the season demands;
Those stoves, that, for pattern and form,
Seem the labour of Mulciber's hands.

All these are not half that I owe
To one from our earliest youth,
To me ever ready to show
Benignity, friendship, and truth:
For Time, the destroyer, declared,
And foe of our perishing kind,
If even her face he has spared,
Much less could he alter her mind.

Thus compass'd about with the goods
And chattels of leisure and ease,
I indulge my poetical moods
In many such fancies as these:
And fancies I fear they will seem,
Poets' goods are not often so fine;
The poets will swear that I dream,
When I sing of the splendour of mine.

Though Cowper could occasionally trifle in rhyme, for the sake of amusing his friends with an affectionate and endearing gaiety, he appears most truly himself when he exerts his poetical talents for the higher purpose of consoling the afflicted. Witness the following epistle, composed at the request of Lady Austen, to console a particular friend of hers. Twenty-five letters, written by Mrs. Billacoys, the lady to whom the poem is addressed, were inserted in an early volume of the Theological Miscellany, in which the poem also appeared. Mr. Bull has annexed it to Cowper's translations from the spiritual songs of Madame Guion, but I willingly embrace the opportunity of re-printing it in this volume, from a copy corrected by the author, in the pleasing persuasion that it must prove to all religious readers, acquainted with affliction, a lenient charm of very powerful effect.

EPISTLE TO A LADY IN FRANCE.

A Person of great Piety, and much afflicted.

Madam! a stranger's purpose in these lays
Is to congratulate, and not to praise;
To give the creature the Creator's due,
Were guilt in me, and an offence to you.
From man to man, and e'en to woman paid,
Praise is the medium of a knavish trade,
A coin by craft for folly's use design'd,
Spurious, and only current with the blind.

The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;

No trav'ller ever reach'd that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briars on his road.
The world may dance along the flowery plain,
Cheer'd as they go by many a sprightly strain,
Where nature has her yielding mosses spread,
With unshod feet, and yet unharm'd, they tread,
Admonish'd, scorn the caution, and the friend,
Bent all on pleasure, heedless of its end.
But he who knew what human hearts would prove,
How slow to learn the dictates of his love;
That hard by nature, and of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still;
In pity to a chosen few, design'd
T' escape the common ruin of their kind,
Call'd for a cloud to darken all their years,
And said—Go spend them in the vale of tears!

Oh balmy gales of soul-reviving air!
Oh salutary streams that murmur there!
These flowing from the fount of grace above,
Those breath'd from lips of everlasting love!
The flinty soil, indeed, their feet annoys,
Chill blasts of trouble nip their springing joys.
An envious world will interpose its frown,
To mar delights superior to its own,
And many a pang, experienc'd still within,
Reminds them of their hated inmate, sin!
But ills of every shape, of every name,
Transform'd to blessings, miss their cruel aim;
And every moment's calm, that soothes the breast,
Is given in earnest of eternal rest.

Ah! be not sad, although thy lot be cast
Far from the flock, and in a boundless waste;

No shepherds' tents within thy view appear,
But the chief Shepherd even there is near:
Thy tender sorrows and thy plaintive strain
Flow in a foreign land, but not in vain.
Thy tears all issue from a source divine,
And every drop bespeaks a Saviour thine.

So once, in Gideon's fleece, the dews were found,
And drought on all the drooping flocks around.

It may be observed, to the honour of the poet, that his extreme shyness and dislike of addressing an absolute stranger did not preclude him from a free and happy use of his mental powers, when he had a prospect of comforting the distressed. His diffidence was often wonderfully great, but his humanity was greater.

Diffident as Cowper was by nature, though a poet, he wanted not the becoming resolution to defend his poetical opinions, when he felt them to be just; particularly on the structure of English verse, which he had examined with the eye of a master. As a proof of his resolution, I transcribe, with pleasure, a passage from one of his earliest letters to his bookseller, Mr. Johnson.

It happened that some accidental reviser of the manuscript had taken the liberty to alter a line in a poem of Cowper's. This liberty drew from the offended poet the following very just and animated remonstrance, which I am anxious to preserve, because it elucidates, with great felicity of expression, his deliberate ideas on English versification.

"I did not write the line, that has been tampered with, hastily, or without due attention to the construc-

tion of it; and what appeared to me its only merit is, in its present state, entirely annihilated.

"I know that the ears of modern verse-writers are delicate to an excess, and their readers are troubled with the same squeamishness as themselves: so that if a line do not run as smooth as quicksilver, they are offended. A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope: but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them.

"I have said thus much, as I hinted in the beginning, because I have just finished a much longer poem than the last, which our common friend will receive by the same messenger that has charge of this letter. In that poem there are many lines which an ear so nice as the gentleman's who made the above mentioned alteration would undoubtedly condemn, and yet (if I may be permitted to say it,) they cannot be made smoother without being the worse for it. There is a roughness on a plumb which nobody that understands fruit would rub off, though the plumb would be much more polished without it. But lest I tire you, I will only add, that I wish you to guard me for the future from all such meddling: assuring you that I always write as smoothly as I can, but that I never did, never will, sacrifice the the spirit or sense of a passage to the sound of it."

In showing with what proper spirit the poet could occasionally vindicate his own verse, let me observe, that although he frequently speaks in his letters with humorous asperity concerning critics, no man could be more willing to receive, with becoming modesty and gratitude, the friendly assistance of just and temperate criticism. Some proofs of this humility, so laudable, if not uncommon in poets of great powers, I shall seize this opportunity of producing, in a few extracts from a series of the author's letters to his bookseller.

Weston, Feb. 11, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

I am very sensibly obliged by the remarks of Mr. Fuseli, and beg that you will tell him so: they afford me opportunities of improvement which I shall not neglect. When he shall see the press-copy, he will be convinced of this, and will be convinced likewise, that, smart as he sometimes is, he spares me often when I have no mercy on myself. He will see, in short, almost a new translation. * * * I assure you faithfully, that whatever my faults may be, to be easily or hastily satisfied with what I have written is not one of them.

Sept. 7, 1790.

It grieves me that, after all, I am obliged to go into public without the whole advantage of Mr. Fuseli's judicious strictures. My only consolation is, that I have not forfeited them by my own impatience. Five years are no small portion of a man's life, especially at the latter end of it, and in those five years, being a man of almost no engagements, I have done more in the way of hard work than most could have done in twice the number. I beg you to present my

dliments to Mr. Fuseli, with many and sincere ks for the services that his own more important pations would allow him to render me.

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is a singular spectacle for those who love to con- late the progress of social arts, to observe a fo- ıer, who has raised himself to high rank in the ar- s profession of a painter, correcting, and thanked orrecting the chief poet of England in his English on of Homer.

om the series of letters now before me, I cannot t the temptation of transcribing two more pas- , because they display the disposition of Cowper in y amiable point of view. The first relates to Mr. ton—the second to Mr. Johnson himself.

Weston, Oct. 8, 1790.

Mr. Newton having again re- ed that the preface which he wrote for my first ne may be prefixed to it, I am desirous to gratify in a particular that so emphatically bespeaks his dship for me; and should my books see another on, shall be obliged to you if you will add it accor- y.

I beg that you will not suffer reverence, either for Homer or his translator, to k your continual examinations. I never knew, certainty, till now, that the marginal strictures I l in the Task-proofs were yours. The justness of , and the benefit I derived from them, are fresh in nemory, and I doubt not that their utility will be the in the present instance.

eston, Oct. 30, 1790.

anxious to preserve this singular anecdote, a
nourable both to the modest poet, and to his in
nt bookseller.

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t let me recall the reader's attention to the letter
hich the poet delivered his own ideas of Englis
ification.

his letter leads me to suggest a reason why som
ders imagine that the rhyme of Cowper is no
ual to his blank verse. Their idea arises from hi
copying the melody of Pope: but from this he de
ated by design, and his character of Pope, i
e Poem of Table-Talk, may, when added to thi
etter, completely unfold to us his reasons for doing
so. The lines to which I allude are these:

Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
In verse well disciplin'd, complete, compact,
Gave virtue and morality a grace,
That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,
Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
E'en on the fools that trampled on their laws:
But he (his musical finesse was such,
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And every warbler has his tune by heart.

Cowper conceived that Pope, by adhering to
ly to the use of pure Iambic feet in his verse, d
himself of an advantage to be gained by a more
admission of other feet, and particularly S
which, according to Cowper's idea, have a ve
effect in giving variety, dignity, and force.

plifies his idea by exclaiming, in the following couplet of the same poem,

Give me the line that ploughs its stately course
Like a proud swan, conquering the stream by force.

It is, however, remarkable, that Cowper, in his Poem on the Nativity, from the French of Madame Guion, seems to have chosen the style of Pope, which, on other occasions, he had rather tried to avoid. His versification in the poem just mentioned, affords a complete proof that, in rhyme, as in blank verse, he could at once be easy, forcible, and melodious.

Churchill had before objected to an excess of unvaried excellence in the verses of Pope: an objection that appears rather fastidious than reasonable. Happy the poet whose antagonist can only say of his language, that it is too musical, and of his fancy, that it is too much under the guidance of reason! Such are the charges by which even scholars and critics, of acknowledged taste and good nature, have, from the influence of accidental prejudice, endeavoured to lessen the poetical eminence of Pope; a poet remarkably unfortunate in his numerous biographers: for Ruffhead, whom Warburton employed in a task, which gratitude might have taught him to execute better himself, is neglected as dull: Johnson, though he nobly and eloquently vindicates the dignity of the poet, yet betrays a perpetual inclination to render him contemptible as a man: and Warton, though by nature one of the most candid and liberal of critics, continues, as a biographer, to indulge that prejudice which had early induced him, in his popular Essay on this illustrious poet, to endeavour to sink him a little in the scale of poetical renown: not, I believe, from any envious mo-

tive, but as an affectionate compliment to his friend Young, the patron to whom he inscribed his Essay.

Of this continued prejudice, which this good natured critic was himself very far from perceiving, he exhibits a remarkable proof in his Life of Pope, by the following facetious severity on the translation of Homer.

"No two things can be so unlike as the Iliad of Homer and the Iliad of Pope: to colour the images, to point the sentences, to lavish Ovidian graces on the simple Grecian, is to put a bag-wig on Mr. Townly's fine busto of the venerable old bard."

This sentence has all the sprightly pleasantry of my amiable old friend: but to prove that it is critically unjust, the reader has only to observe that Pope is very far from having produced that ludicrous effect which the comparison of the critic supposes. Spectators must laugh, indeed, at a bust of Homer enveloped in a wig; but the reader has not a disposition to laughter in reading the Iliad of Pope. On the contrary, in many, many passages, where it deviates widely from the original, a reader of taste and candour admires both the dexterity and the dignity of the translator; and if he allows the version to be unfaithful, yet, with Mr. Twining, (the accomplished translator of Aristotle, who has justly and gracefully applied an expressive Latin verse to this glorious translation, so bitterly branded with the epithet unfaithful) he tenderly exclaims,

"Perfida, sed quamvis perfida, cara tamen."

I have been induced, by a sense of what is due to the great works of real genius, to take the part of Pope against the lively injustice of a departed friend, for whose literary talents, and for whose social character,

I still retain the sincerest regard. The delight and the improvement derived from such noble works as the Homer of Pope, ought to guard every scholar against any partialities of friendship that can render him blind to the predominant merits, or severe to the petty imperfections of such a work. Predominant merits and petty imperfections are certainly to be found in the translation of Pope. These are temperately and judiciously displayed in the liberal essay of that gentle and amiable critic, Spense, on the Odyssey; who, though he was rather partial to blank verse, yet regarded Pope's Homer as a work entitled to great admiration. It is, indeed, a work so truly admirable, that I should be sorry if the more faithful version of my favourite friend could materially injure its author: but between Pope and Cowper there is no contest: "They are performers on different instruments," as Cowper has very properly remarked himself, in the preface to his own translation.

We may apply to the two translators, therefore, the comprehensive Latin words that Gibbon applied to two eminent lawyers, *Magis pares, quam similes;*" but of the two translators it may be added, that each has attained such a degree of excellence in the mode he adopted, as will probably remain unsurpassed for ever. Instead, therefore, of endeavouring to decide which is entitled to the greater portion of praise, a reader, who has derived great pleasure from both, may rather wish (for the embellishment and honour of the English language) that it may exhibit a double version of every great ancient poet, perfectly equal in spirit and beauty to the Homers of Pope and of Cowper. My impartial esteem for the merits of these two pre-eminent translators had almost tempted me to introduce in this composition a minute display of their alternate suc-

cesses and failures in many most striking passages of Homer; but, on reflection, it appears to me, that such a comparison, if fairly and extensively conducted, would form an episode too large for the body of my work, and the spirit of my departed friend seemed to admonish me against it, in the following words of his Grecian favourite:

Μητ' αρ με μαλ' αινει. μητε τι νεικει
Ειδοσι γαρ τοι ταυτα μετ' Αργειοις αγορευεις.

"Neither praise me much, nor blame,
For these are Grecians in whose ears thou speak'st,
And know me well.

Cowper's Homer's Iliad, 10.

I will therefore confine myself to the general result of such a comparison, and I am persuaded that all unprejudiced scholars, who may amuse themselves by pursuing the comparison, will find the result to be this: that both the English poets have rendered noble justice to their original, taken altogether; that, in separate parts, each translator has frequently sunk beneath him, and each, in their happier moments, surpassed the model which they endeavoured to copy.

Pope had partners in the latter portion of his work: Cowper accomplished his mighty labour by his own exertions: and he seems to have taken an honest pleasure in recording, with his own hand, the time and the pains that he bestowed on his translation.

In the copy of Clarke's Homer, which he valued particularly as the gift of his friend, Mr. Rose, he inserted the following memorandum.

"My translation of the Iliad I began on the twenty-

first day of November, in the year 1784, and finished the translation of the Odyssey on the twenty-fifth day of August 1790. During eight months of this time I was hindered by indisposition, so that I have been occupied in the work, on the whole, five years and one month.
———WM. COWPER.

"Mem: I gave the work another revisal while it was in the press, which I finished March 4, 1791."

When we add to this account all the time which he gave the preparations for his second edition, it will hardly be hyperbolical to say, that this deeply studied version of Homer was, like the siege of Troy, a work of ten years. Nor will this time appear wonderful, when we recollect how determined Cowper was to be as minutely faithful as possible to the exact sense of his original. The following passage from one of his letters to Mr. Park will show how much he gratified his own mind by such scrupulous fidelity. In thanking his friend for a present of Chapman's Iliad, he says:

"*Weston, July* 15, 1793.

"I have consulted him in one passage of some difficulty, and find him giving a sense of his own, not at all warranted by the words of Homer. Pope sometimes does this, and sometimes omits the difficult part entirely. I can boast of having done neither, though it has cost me infinite pains to exempt myself from the necessity."

The late Mr. Wakefield, in republishing Pope's Homer, has mentioned Cowper's superior fidelity to his original with the liberal praise of a scholar; but he falls, I think into injudicious severity on the structure of his verse—a severity the more remarkable, as he

warmly censures Boswell for *unfeeling petulance* an *insolent dogmatism*, in speaking of Cowper's transla tion. Mr. Wakefield, though a man of extensiv learning and acute sensibility, appears to me in som measure unjust both to Cowper and to Pope. He la bours to prove that Pope was miserably defective in th knowledge of Greek, and questions the exactitude o Lord Bathurst's testimony, in the anecdote that seem ed to vindicate the translator's acquaintance with the original. It is in my power to strengthen the credibi lity of that anecdote by a circumstance within my own memory, which I mention with pleasure, to refute a strange uncandid supposition that Pope did not read himself the Greek which he profest to translate, but trusted entirely to other translators. Many years ago I had in my hands a small edition of Homer, (Greek without Latin) and it was the very copy that Pope used in his translation. It had a few memorandums in his own hand-writing, ascertaining the lines he translated on such and such days. I might have bought the book for a price considerably above its value, but I was at the time unhappily infected with Warton's prejudice a- gainst the genius of Pope, and from the influence of that prejudice I failed to purchase a book which, "on my mended judgment, if I offend not to say it is mend- ed," I should have rejoiced to acquire by doubling the price. May this petty anecdote be a warning to every literary youth, of an ardent spirit, not to adopt too hastily ideas that may lessen his regard for such cele- brated writers as time and experience will probably endear to his more cultivated mind.

It is, indeed, a prejudice not uncommon in the litera- ry world, that little respect is due to poetical transla- tors. The learned and amiable Jortin says, in his Life *of Erasmus*, "The translating of poets into other lan-

guages, and into verse, seems to be an occupation beneath a good poet; a work in which there is much labour and little honour."

Jortin was led to this idea by some expressions in a letter from Erasmus to Eobanus Hessus, who translated Homer into very animated Latin verse. As that translator did not employ a living language in his version of the great poet, his correspondent might justly apprehend that the credit of his work would not be answerable to its labour. But surely the case is very different, when poets, who have gained reputation by original works in a modern language, devote their talents to make their countrymen, learned or unlearned, easily and agreeably intimate with the poetical favourites of the ancient world.

Jortin presumes that pecuniary advantage must be a primary motive with a translator of extensive works; but there is a nobler incentive to such composition, and one that, I am persuaded, was very forcibly felt both by Pope and Cowper: I mean the generous gratification that a feeling spirit enjoys in a fair prospect of adding new lustre to the glory of a favourite author, to whom he has been often indebted for inexhaustible delight. He labours, indeed; but he frequently labours

"Studio fallente laborem."

Yet the magnitude of such works entitles them to no ordinary praise, when they are accomplished with considerable success. Every nation ought to think itself highly indebted to translators who enrich their native languages by works of such merit as the Homers of Pope and of Cowper, because a long translation to the greatest masters of poetical diction is a sort of fatiguing dance performed in fetters. It certainly was so to Pope, and even to Cowper, whose versification, in his

Homer, though so excellent that it gives his translation what Johnson calls the first excellence of a translator, "to be read with pleasure by those who know not the original," yet seems not, in every part, to have that exquisite union of force, freedom and fluency, which is felt so delightfully through all the books of the Task. It is there that the versification of Cowper is most truly Homeric, that it perpetually displays what Plutarch describes as the characteristic of Homer's verse, compared with that of Antimachus, "a certain charm, superadded to other graces and power, an appearance of having been executed with dexterous facility."*

Perhaps of all poets, ancient and modern, Homer, and Cowper in his original composition, exhibit this charm in the highest degree. They both have the gift of speaking in verse, as if poetry were their native tongue.

The poetical powers of the latter were indeed a gift, and his use of them was worthy of the veneration which he felt towards the giver of every good. He has accomplished, as a poet, the sublimest objects of poetical ambition—he has dissipated the general prejudice that held it hardly possible for a modern author to succeed in sacred poetry—he has proved that verse and devotion are natural allies—he has shown that true poetical genius cannot be more honourably or more delightfully employed than in diffusing through the heart and mind of man, a filial affection for his Maker, with a firm and cheerful trust in his word. He has sung in a strain equal to the subject, the blessed Advent of universal peace; and perhaps the temperate enthusiasm of friendship may not appear too presumptuous in sup-

* Plutarch, in Timoleone.

posing that his poetry will have no inconsiderable influence in preparing the world for a consummation so devoutly to be wished.

Those who are little inclined to attribute such mighty powers to modern verse may yet allow, that the more the works of Cowper are read, the more his readers will find reason to admire the variety and the extent, the graces and the energy of his literary talents. The universal admiration excited by these will be heightened and endeared, to the friends of virtue, by the obvious reflection, that his writings, excellent as they appear, were excelled by the gentleness, the benevolence, and the sanctity of his life. To the merits of such a life, I could wish that a more early intimacy with my departed friend had enabled me to render more ample justice; but affection has made me industrious in my endeavours to supply, from the purest sources of intelligence, all the deficiency of my personal knowledge; and in composing this cordial tribute to a man whose history is so universally interesting, my chief ambition has been to deserve the approbation of his pure spirit, who appeared to me on earth among the most amiable of earthly friends, and whom I cherish a lively hope of beholding in a state of happier existence, with the spirits of "just men made perfect." Pardon me, thou tenderest of mortals, if I have praised thee with a warmth of affection that might appear to thy diffident nature to border on excess. I am not conscious that I have, in the slightest particular, overstepped the modesty of truth; but, lest expressions of my own should have a more questionable shape, I will close this imperfect, though affectionate memorial, by applying to thee those tender and beautiful verses which Cowley (one of thy favourite poets) addressed

to a poetical brother, in all points, perhaps, and assuredly in genius, by many degrees, thy inferior.

Long did the Muses banish'd slaves abide,
And build vain pyramids to mortal pride:
Like Moses, thou (though spells and charms withstand)
Hast brought them nobly home, back to their holy land.
Poet and Saint, to thee are justly given,
The two most sacred names of Earth and Heaven.

POSTSCIPT.

IT has been once more my lot, during the process of printing an extensive work, to lose a friend whom I had anxiously hoped to please with a sight of my completed publication. I allude to Lady Austen, whose name is justly mentioned with honour in the Life of Cowper, as she possessed and exerted an influence so happily favourable to the genius of the poet. Before I began the present work, I had the pleasure and advantage to form a personal acquaintance with this lady: she favoured me, in a very graceful and obliging manner, with much valuable information, and with some highly interesting materials for the history of our friend, who had sportively given her the title of sister, and who, while their intercourse lasted, treated her with all the tenderness and all the confidence of a brother.

Her maiden name was Richardson: she was married, very early in life, to Sir Robert Austen, Baronet,

id resided with him in France, where he died. Her tercourse with Cowper is already related. In a subquent period she was married to a native of France, r. De Tardif, a gentleman and a poet, who has exessed, in many elegant French verses, his just and ep sense of her accomplished, endearing character. visiting Paris with him, in the course of the last mmer, she sunk under the fatigue of the excursion, id died in that city on the twelfth of August, 1802.

My obligations to her kindness induce me to termiate this brief account of a person so cordially regardl by Cowper, and so instrumental to the existence of s greatest work, with an offering of respect and gratude, in the shape of an

EPITAPH.

Honour and Peace, ye guardians kindly just,
Fail not in duty to this hallow'd dust!
And mortals (all whose cultur'd spirits know
Joys that pure faith and heavenly verse bestow)
Passing this tomb, its buried inmate bless,
And obligation to her powers confess,
Who, when she grac'd this earth, in Austen's name,
Wak'd, in a poet, inspiration's flame!
Remov'd, by counsel, like the voice of spring,
Fetters of diffidence from Fancy's wing,
Sent the freed eagle in the sun to bask,
And from the mind of Cowper—call'd the Task!

I close my work with these verses, from a peruasion that I can pay no tribute to the memory of owper more truly acceptable to his tender spirit, than raise sincerely bestowed on the objects of his affection.

APPENDIX.

During Cowper's visit to Eartham, he kindly pointed out to me three of his papers in the last volume of the Connoisseur. I inscribed them with his name at the time, and imagine that the readers of his Life may be gratified in seeing them inserted here. I find other numbers of that work ascribed to him; but the three following I print as his, on his own explicit authority. Number 119. *Thursday, May* 6, 1756.—*Number* 134. *Thursday, August* 19, 1756. —*Number* 138. *Thursday, September* 16, 1756.

THE CONNOISSEUR.

(NUMBER 119.)

Plenus rimarum sum, huc et illuc perfluo.
TER.

Leaky at bottom; if those chinks you stop,
In vain—the secret will run o'er at top.

THERE is no mark of our confidence taken more kindly by a friend, than the entrusting him with a secret; nor any which he is so likely to abuse. Confidants in general are like crazy firelocks, which are no sooner charged and cocked, than the spring gives way;

and the report immediately follows. Happy to have been thought worthy the confidence of one friend, they are impatient to manifest their importance to another: till, between them and their friend, and their friend's friend, the whole matter is presently known to *all our friends round the wrekin.* The secret catches, as it were by contact, and, like electrical matter, breaks forth from every link in the chain, almost at the same instant. Thus the whole exchange may be thrown into a buz to-morrow by what was whispered in the middle of Marlborough Downs this morning, and in a week's time the streets may ring with the intrigue of a woman of fashion, bellowed out from the foul mouths of the hawkers, though at present it is known to no creature living but her gallant and her waiting-maid.

As the talent of secrecy is of so great importance to society, and the necessary commerce between individuals cannot be securely carried on without it, that this deplorable weakness should be so general is much to be lamented. You may as well pour water into a funnel, or a seive, and expect it to be retained there, as commit any of your concerns to so slippery a companion. It is remarkable, that in those men who have thus lost the faculty of retention, the desire of being communicative is always most prevalent where it is least justified. If they are intrusted with a matter of no great moment, affairs of more consequence will, perhaps, in a few hours, shuffle it entirely out of their thoughts: but if any thing be delivered to them with an earnestness, a low voice, and the gesture of a man in terror for the consequence of its being known; if the door is bolted, and every precaution taken to prevent surprise, however they may promise secrecy, and however they may intend it, the weight upon their minds will be so extremely oppressive, that it will certainly put their tongues in motion.

s breach of trust, so universal amongst us, is per-
a great measure owing to our education. The
esson our little masters and misses are taught is
ome blabs and tell-tales: they are bribed to di-
the petty intrigues of the family below stairs to
and mama in the parlour; and a doll or hobby-
is generally the encouragement of a propensity
could scarcely be atoned for by a whipping. As
s children can lisp out the little intelligence they
picked up in the hall, or the kitchen, they are
ed for their wit: if the butler has been caught
the housekeeper in his pantry, or the footman
ed in romping with the chambermaid, away flies
Tommy or Betsy with the news: the parents are
admiration of the pretty rogue's understanding,
eward such uncommon ingenuity with a kiss or a
plumb.

does an inclination to secrecy meet with less en-
gement at school. The governants at the board-
hool teach miss to be a good girl, and tell them
thing she knows: thus, if any young lady is un-
ately discovered eating a green apple in a cor-
if she is heard to pronounce a naughty word, or
ght picking the letters out of another miss's
er, away runs the chit who is so happy as to get
art of the rest, screams out her information as
es; and the prudent matron chucks her under
in, and tells her that she is a good girl, and eve-
y will love her.

management of our young gentlemen is equally
l: in most of our schools, if a lad is discovered in
pe, the impeachment of an accomplice, as at
d-Bailey, is made the condition of a pardon. I
nber a boy, engaged in robbing an orchard, who
nfortunately taken prisoner in an apple-tree, and

conducted, under the strong guard of the farmer and his dairy maid, to the master's house. Upon his absolute refusal to discover his associates, the pedagogue undertook to lash him out of his fidelity; but finding it impossible to scourge the secret out of him, he at last gave him up for an obstinate villain, and sent him to his father, who told him he was ruined, and was going to disinherit him for not betraying his school-fellows.

I must own I am not fond of thus drubbing our youths into treachery; and am much pleased with the request of Ulysses, when he went to Troy, who begged of those who were to have the care of young Telemachus, that they would, above all things, teach him to be just, sincere, faithful, and to keep a secret.

Every man's experience must have furnished him with instances of confidants who are not to be relied on, and friends who are not to be trusted; but few, perhaps, have thought it a character so well worth their attention, as to have marked out the different degrees into which it may be divided, and the different methods by which secrets are communicated.

Ned Trusty is a tell-tale of a very singular kind. Having some sense of his duty, he hesitates a little at the breach of it. If he engages never to utter a syllable, he most punctually performs his promise; but then he has the knack of insinuating, by a nod and a shrug well-timed, or a seasonable leer, as much as others can convey in express terms. It is difficult, in short, to determine whether he is more to be admired for his resolution in not mentioning, or his ingenuity in disclosing a secret. He is also excellent at a doubtful phrase, as Hamlet calls it, or ambiguous giving out; and his conversation consists chiefly of such broken inuendoes as—"well I know—or I could—and if

would—or, if I list to speak—or, there be, and if there might," &c.

Here he generally stops, and leaves it to his hearers to draw proper inferences from these piece-meal premises. With due encouragement, however, he may be prevailed on to slip the padlock from his lips, and immediately overwhelms you with a torrent of secret history, which rushes forth with more violence for having been so long confined.

Poor Meanwell, though he never fails to transgress, is rather to be pitied than condemned. To trust him with a secret is to spoil his appetite, to break his rest, and to deprive him, for a time, of every earthly enjoyment. Like a man who travels with his whole fortune in his pocket, he is terrified if you approach him, and immediately suspects that you come with a felonious intent to rob him of his charge. If he ventures abroad, it is to walk in some unfrequented place, where he is least in danger of an attack. At home he shuts himself up from his family, paces to and fro his chamber, and has no relief but from muttering over to himself what he longs to publish to the world, and would gladly submit to the office of town-cryer, for the liberty of proclaiming it in the market-place. At length, however, weary of his burden, and resolved to bear it no longer, he consigns it to the custody of the first friend he meets, and returns to his wife with a cheerful aspect, and wonderfully altered for the better.

Careless is, perhaps, equally undesigning, though not equally excusable. Intrust him with an affair of the utmost importance, on the concealment of which your fortune and happiness depend: he hears you with a kind of half attention, whistles a favourite air, and accompanies it with the drumming of his fingers upon the table. As soon as your narration is ended, or per-

haps in the middle of it, he asks your opinio
sword-knot—damns his taylor for having dress
in a snuff-coloured coat instead of a pompadou
leaves you in haste to attend an auction; wher
he meant to dispose of his intelligence to the b
der, he divulges it with a voice as loud as
tioneer's; and when you tax him with having
you false, he is heartily sorry for it, but neve
that it was to be a secret.

To these I might add the character of the op
unreserved, who thinks it a breach of friendship
ceal any thing from his intimates; and the ir
nent, who having, by dint of observation, mad
self master of your secret, imagines he may l
publish the knowledge it cost him so much la
obtain, and considers that privilege as the rewa
to his industry. But I shall leave these, with
other characters, which my reader's own exp
may suggest to him, and conclude with prescrib
a short remedy for this evil—that no man may
the council of his friend, let every man keep his

THE CONNOISSEUR.

(NUMBER 134.)

Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
Romane, donec templa refeceris
Ædesque labentia Deorum, et
Fœda nigro simulacra fumo.

HOR.

The tottering tow'r and mould'ring walls repair,
And fill with decency the house of prayer;
Quick to the needy curate bring relief,
And deck the parish-church without a brief.

MR. VILLAGE to MR. TOWN.

DEAR COUSIN,

THE country, at present, no less than the metropolis, abounding with politicians of every kind, I begin to despair of picking up any intelligence that might possibly be entertaining to your readers. However, I have lately visited some of the most distant parts of the kingdom, with a clergyman of my acquaintance. I shall not trouble you with an account of the improvements that have been made in the seats we saw, according to the modern taste, but proceed to give you some reflections which occurred to us in observing several country churches, and the behaviour of their congregations.

The ruinous condition of some of these edifices gave me great offence; and I could not help wishing that the honest vicar, instead of indulging his genius

for improvements, by enclosing his gooseberry bushes within a Chinese rail, and converting half an acre of his glebe-land into a bowling green, would have applied part of his income to the more laudable purpose of sheltering his parishioners from the weather during their attendance on divine service. It is no uncommon thing to see the parsonage-house well thatched, and in exceeding good repair, while the church perhaps has scarce any other roof than the ivy that grows over it. The noise of owls, bats, and magpies makes the principal part of the church music in many of these ancient edifices; and the walls, like a large map, seem to be portioned out into capes, seas, and promontories, by the various colours by which the damps have stained them. Sometimes the foundation being too weak to support the steeple any longer, it has been found expedient to pull down that part of the building, and to hang the bells under a wooden shed on the ground beside it. This is the case in a parish in Norfolk, through which I lately passed, and where the clerk and the sexton, like the two figures of St. Dunstan's, serve the bells in capacity of clappers, by striking them alternately with a hammer.

In other churches I have observed that nothing unseemly or ruinous is to be found, except in the clergyman, and the appendages of his person. The 'squire of the parish, or his ancestors, perhaps, to testify their devotion, and leave a lasting monument of their magnificence, have adorned the altar-piece with the richest crimson velvet, embroidered with vine-leaves and ears of wheat; and have dressed up the pulpit with the same splendour and expense; while the gentleman who fills it is exalted, in the midst of all this finery, with a surplice as dirty as a farmer's frock, and a periwig that seems to have transferred its facul-

ty of curling to the band, which appears in full buckle beneath it.

But if I was concerned to see several distressed pastors, as well as many of our country churches, in a tottering condition, I was more offended with the indecency of worship in others. I could wish that the clergy would inform their congregations, that there is no occasion to scream themselves hoarse in making the responses; that the town-cryer is not the only person qualified to pray with due devotion; and that he who bawls the loudest may nevertheless be the wickedest fellow in the parish. The old women, too, in the aisle might be told, that their time would be better employed in attending to the sermon, than in fumbling over their tattered testaments till they have found the text; by which time the discourse is near drawing to a conclusion: while a word or two of instruction might not be thrown away upon the younger part of the congregation, to teach them that making posies in summer time, and cracking nuts in autumn, is no part of the religious ceremony.

The good old practice of psalm-singing is, indeed, wonderfully improved in many country churches since the days of Sternhold and Hopkins; and there is scarce a parish clerk who has so little taste as not to pick his staves out of the new version. This has occasioned great complaints in some places, where the clerk has been forced to bawl by himself, because the rest of the congregation cannot find the psalm at the end of their prayer-books; while others are highly disgusted at the innovation, and stick as obstinately to the old version as to the old style.

The tunes themselves have also been new set to jiggish measures, and the sober drawl which used to accompany the two first staves of the hundredth Psalm,

with the Gloria Patri, is now split into as many
vers as an Italian air. For this purpose the ve
ry country an itinerant band of vocal musici
make it their business to go round to all the c
in their turns, and after a prelude with the pit
astonish the audience with hymns set to the ne
chester measure, and anthems of their own con

As these new-fashioned psalmodists are nec
made up of young men and maids, we may n
suppose that there is a perfect concord and sy
between them: and, indeed, I have known it
that these sweet singers have more than on
brought into disgrace by too close an unison
the thorough-bass and the treble.

It is a difficult matter to decide which is loo
on as the greatest man in a country church, th
or his clerk. The latter is most certainly hel
higher veneration, where the former happens t
ly a poor curate, who rides post every Sabba
village to village, and mounts and dismount
church-door. The clerk's office is not only to
prayers with an amen, or usher in the sermo
stave; but he is also the universal father to gi
the brides, and the standing godfather to all t
born bantlings. But, in many places, there is stil
ter man belonging to the church than either th
or the clerk himself. The person I mean is the
who, like the king, may be styled head of the c
his own parish. If the benefice be in his own
vicar is his creature, and, of consequence, en
his devotion: or if the care of the church be
curate, the Sunday-fees, roast-beef and plumb-
and the liberty to shoot in the manor, will bring
much under the 'squire's command as his dogs ar
es.

For this reason, the bell is often kept tolling, and the people waiting in the church-yard, an hour longer than the usual time; nor must the service begin till the 'squire has strutted up the aisle and seated himself in the great pew in the chancel. The length of the sermon is also measured by the will of the 'squire, as formerly by the hour glass; and I know one parish where the preacher has always the complaisance to conclude his discourse, however abruptly, the minute that the 'squire gives the signal by rising up after his nap.

In a village church, the 'squire's lady or the vicar's wife, are perhaps the only females that are stared at for their finery; but in the large cities and towns, where the newest fashions are brought down weekly by the stage-coach, or waggon, all the wives and daughters of the most topping tradesmen vie with each other, every Sunday, in the elegance of their apparel. I could even trace the gradations in their dress, according to the opulence, the extent, and the distance of the place from London. I was at church in a populous city in the north, where the mace-bearer cleared the way for Mrs. Mayoress, who came sliding after him in an enormous fan-hoop, of a pattern which had never been seen before in those parts. At another church, in a corporation town, I saw several *negligees*, with furbellowed aprons, which had long disputed the prize of superiority: but these were most woefully eclipsed by a burgess's daughter, just come from London, who appeared in a *trollopine* or *slammerkin*, with treble ruffles to the cuffs, pinked and gymped, and the sides of the petticoat drawn up in festoons. In some lesser borough towns, the contest I found lay between three or four black and green bibs and aprons. At one a grocer's wife attracted our eyes by a new fashion cap, called a joan, and at another

they were wholly taken up by a mercer's daughter in a nun's hood.

I need not say any thing of the behaviour of the congregations in these more polite places of religious resort; as the same genteel ceremonies are practised there as at the most fashionable churches in town. The ladies, immediately on their entrance, breathe a pious ejaculation through their fan-sticks, and the beaux very gravely address themselves to the haberdashers' bills, glewed upon the lining of their hats. This pious duty is no sooner performed than the exercise of bowing and curtesying succeeds; the locking and unlocking of the pews drowns the reader's voice at the beginning of the service; and the rustling of silks, added to the whispering and tittering of so much good company, renders him totally unintelligible to the very end of it.

I am, dear cousin, yours, &c.

THE CONNOISSEUR.

(NUMBER 138.)

Servata semper lege et ratione loquendi.

Juv.

Your talk to decency and reason suit,
Not prate like fools, or gabble like a brute.

IN the comedy of the Frenchman in London, which we are told was acted at Paris with universal applause for several nights together, there is a character of a rough Englishman, who is represented as quite unskilled in the graces of conversation, and his dialogue con-

ts almost entirely of a repetition of the common salu-
tion of, How do you do? how do you do? Our nation has,
deed, been generally supposed to be of a sullen and
communicative disposition; while, on the other hand,
e loquacious French have been allowed to possess the
t of conversing beyond all other people. The Eng-
hman requires to be wound up frequently, and stops
ry soon; but the Frenchman runs on in a continued
rum. Yet it must be acknowledged, that as the
glish consist of very different humours, their manner
discourse admits of great variety: but the whole
ench nation converse alike; and there is no differ-
ce in their address between a marquis and valet de
ambre. We may frequently see a couple of French
rbers accosting each other in the street, and paying
eir compliments with the same volubility of speech,
e same grimace, and action, as two courtiers in the
uilleries.

I shall not attempt to lay down any particular rules
conversation, but rather point out such faults in dis-
urse and behaviour as render the company of half
nkind rather tedious than amusing. It is in vain,
leed, to look for conversation where we might ex-
ct to find it in the greatest perfection, among persons
fashion; there it is almost annihilated by universal
rd-playing; insomuch, that I have heard it given as
reason, why it is impossible for our present writers
succeed in the dialogue of genteel comedy, that our
ople of quality scarce ever meet but to game. All
eir discourse turns upon the odd trick, and the four
nours, and it is no less a maxim with the votaries of
ist than with those of Bacchus, that talking spoils
mpany.

Every one endeavours to make himself as agreeable
society as he can; but it often happens that those

who most aim at shining in conversation o
mark. Though a man succeeds, he sh
frequently the case) engross the whole ta
for that destroys the very essence of conve
is talking together. We should try to ke
sation like a ball bandied to and fro fro
ther, rather than seize it ourselves, and
us, like a foot-ball. We should likewise
adapt the matter of our discourse to our
not to talk Greek before ladies, or of the
below to a meeting of country justices.

But nothing thr ws a more ridiculous
whole conversation than certain peculi
acquired, but very difficultly conquered a
In order to display these absurdities in a
is my present purpose to enumerate such
most commonly to be met with; and firs
tice of those buffoons in society, the attitu
face-makers. These accompany every
peculiar grimace or gesture: they assent
and contradict with a twisting of the nec
with a wry mouth, and pleased in a cape
step. They may be considered as speakin
and their rules of eloquence are taken
ture-master. These should be condemn
only in dumb show with their own person
glass; as well as the smirkers and si
prettily set off their faces, together with
a je-ne-scai-quoi between a grin and a d
these we may likewise rank the affected t
who are constantly taking off the peculia
or gesture of their acquaintance; though
wretched imitators, that (like bad pair
frequently forced to write the name und
before we can discover any likeness.

Next to these, whose elocution is absorbed in action, and who converse chiefly with their arms and legs, we may consider the profest speakers. And first, the emphatical; who squeeze, and press, and ram down every syllable with excessive vehemence and energy. These orators are remarkable for their distinct elocution and force of expression; they dwell on the important particles *of* and *the*, and the significant conjunctive *and*; which they seem to hawk up with much difficulty out of their own throats, and to cram them with no less pain into the ears of their auditors.

These should be suffered only to syringe (as it were) the ears of a deaf man, through an hearing trumpet: though, I must confess, that I am equally offended with whisperers or low speakers, who seem to fancy all their acquaintance deaf, and come up so close to you, that they may be said to measure noses with you, and frequently overcome you with the exhalations of a powerful breath. I would have these oracular gentry obliged to talk at a distance through a speaking trumpet, or apply their lips to the walls of a whispering gallery. The wits, who will not condescend to utter any thing but a bon mot, and the whistlers, or tune-hummers, who never articulate at all, may be joined very agreeably together in concert; and to these tinkling cymbals I would also add the sounding brass, the bawler, who inquires after your health with the bellowing of a town-cryer.

The tatlers, whose pliable pipes are admirably adapted to the "soft parts of conversation," and sweetly "prattling out of fashion," make very pretty music from a beautiful face and a female tongue: but from a rough manly voice and coarse features, mere nonsense is as harsh and dissonant as a jig from an hurdy-gurdy. The swearers I have spoken of in a

former paper; but the half-swearers, who split, and mince, and fritter their oaths into *gad's-but*, *ad's-fish*, and *demme;* the Gothic humbuggers, and those who "nick-name God's creatures," and call a man a cabbage, a crab, a queer cub, an odd fish, and an unaccountable *muskin*, should never come into company without an interpreter. But I will not tire my reader's patience, by pointing out all the pests of conversation; nor dwell particularly on the sensibles, who pronounce dogmatically on the most trivial points, and speak in sentences; the wonderers, who are always wondering what o'clock it is, or wondering whether it will rain or no, or wondering when the moon changes; the phraseologists, who explain a thing by *all that*, or enter into particulars with *this*, *that*, and *t'other;* and, lastly, the silent men, who seem afraid of opening their mouths, lest they should catch cold, and literally observe the precept of the gospel, by letting their conversation be only yea yea, and nay nay.

The rational intercourse kept up by conversation, is one of our principal distinctions from brutes. We should therefore endeavour to turn this peculiar talent to our advantage, and consider the organs of speech as the instruments of understanding. We should be very careful not to use them as the weapons of vice, or tools of folly, and do our utmost to unlearn any trivial or ridiculous habits, which tend to lessen the value of such an inestimable prerogative. It is, indeed, imagined by some philosophers, that even birds and beasts (though without the power of articulation) perfectly understand one another by the sounds they utter; and that dogs and cats, &c. have each a particular language to themselves, like different nations. Thus it may be supposed, that the nightingales of Italy have as fine an ear for their own native wood-notes as any signor or signora

for an Italian air; that the boars of Westphalia grunt-tle as expressively through the nose as the inhabitants in High-German; and that the frogs in the dykes of Holland croak as intelligibly as the natives jabber their Low Dutch. However this may be, we may consider those whose tongues hardly seem to be under the influence of reason, and do not keep up the proper conversation of human creatures, as imitating the language of different animals. Thus, for instance, the affinity between chatterers and monkeys, and praters and parrots, is too obvious not to occur at once: Grunters and growlers may be justly compared to hogs; snarlers are curs; and the *spitfire passionate* are a sort of wild-cats that will not bear stroaking, but will pur when they are pleased. Complainers are screech-owls; and story-tellers, always repeating the same dull note, are cuckows. Poets, that prick up their ears at their own hideous braying, are no better than asses; critics in general are venomous serpents, that delight in hissing; and some of them who have got by heart a few technical terms, without knowing their meaning, are no other than magpies. I myself, who have crowed to the whole town for near three years past, may, perhaps, put my readers in mind of a dunghill cock: but as I must acquaint them, that they will hear the last of me on this day fortnight, I hope they will then consider me as a swan, who is supposed to sing sweetly in his dying moments.

CONCLUSION.

Astanti sat erit dicam sim tibi curæ:
* * * * * * *
Forsitan et nostros ducat de marmore vultus
Nectens aut paphia myrti, aut parnasside lauri
Fronde comas, at ego secura pace quiescam.

MILTONI MANSUS.

I shall but need to say, be yet my friend:
He too, perhaps, shall bid the marble breathe
To honour me; and with the graceful wreath,
Or of Parnassus, or the Paphian Isle,
Shall bind my brows—but I shall rest the while.

COWPER'S TRANSLATION.

THE

CONCLUSION.

)UGH it seems unnecessary to enumerate the public compliments that have been paid, by a of writers, to the poetical excellence of Cow- must not fail to notice a private tribute to his which the kindness of a distant friend transmit- me while these volumes were in the press.

ıe form of a letter, to an accomplished author of l, it comprises a series of extensive observations poetry of my departed friend; observations so taste and feeling, that I hope the judicious wri- l, in a season of leisure, revise, extend, and t them into a separate monument to the memory)oet, whom he is worthy to praise.

g favoured with the liberty of using, in this pub- , the manuscript I have mentioned, I shall se-)m it a passage relating both to Milton and to r, as an introduction to the proposal in honour wo illustrious and congenial poets, with which I lready promised to close this address to the pub-

: many forcible remarks on the moral spirit of and a quotation from Lowth on its end and ef- the animated critic proceeds in the following

"The noblest benefits and delights of poetry can be but rarely produced, because all the requisites for producing them so very seldom meet. A vivid mind, and happy imitative power, may enable a poet to form glowing pictures of virtue, and almost produce in himself a short-lived enthusiasm of goodness; but although even these transient and factitious movements of mind may serve to produce grand and delightful effusions of poetry, yet when the best of these are compared with the poetic productions of a genuine lover of virtue, a discerning judgment will scarcely fail to mark the difference. A simplicity of conception and expression—a conscious, and therefore unaffected dignity—and instinctive adherence to sober reason, even amid the highest flights—an uniform justness and consistency of thought—a glowing, yet temperate ardour of feeling—a peculiar felicity, both in the choice and combination of terms, by which even the plainest words acquire the truest character of eloquence, and which is rarely to be found, except where a subject is not only most intimately known, but cordially loved; these, I conceive, are the features peculiar to the real votary of virtue and which must, of course, give to his strains a perfection of effect never to be attained by the poet of inferior moral endowments.

I believe it will be readily granted, that all these qualities were never more perfectly combined than in the poetry of *Milton;* and I think, too, there will be little doubt, that the next to him, in every one of these instances, beyond all comparison, is *Cowper*. The genius of the latter did certainly not lead him to emulate the songs of the seraphim. But though he pursues a lower walk of poetry than his great master, he appears no less the votary of pure unmixed goodness. Nay, perhaps he may, in this one respect, possess

some peculiar excellences, which may make him seem more the bard of Christianity. That divine religion infinitely exalts, but it also deeply humbles the mind it inspires. It gives majesty to the thoughts, but it impresses meekness on the manners, and diffuses tenderness through the feelings. It combines sensibility with fortitude—the lowliness of the child with the magnanimity of the hero.

The grandest features of the Christian character were never more gloriously exemplified than in that spirit which animates the whole of Milton's poetry. His own *Michael* does not impress us with the idea of a purer or more awful virtue than that which we feel in every portion of his majestic verse; and he no less happily indicates the source from which his excellence was derived, by the bright beams which he ever and anon reflects upon us from the sacred scriptures. But the milder graces of the gospel are certainly less apparent. What we behold is so awful, it might almost have inspired a wish, that a spirit equally pure and heavenly might be raised to illustrate, with like felicity, the more attractive and gentler influences of our divine religion.

In Cowper, above any poet that ever lived, would such a wish be fulfilled. In his charming effusions, we have the same spotless purity—the same elevated devotion—the same vital exercise of every noble and exalted quality of the mind—the same devotedness to the sacred scriptures, and to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel: the difference is, that instead of an almost repressive dignity, we have the sweetest familiarity—instead of the majestic grandeur of the Old Testament, we have the winning graces of the New—instead of those thunders by which angels were discomfited, we

have, as it were, "the still small voice" of Him who was meek and lowly of heart.

May we not then venture to assert, that from that spirit of devoted piety which has rendered both these great men liable to the charm of religious enthusiasm, but which, in truth, raised the minds of both to a kind of happy residence,

"In regions mild, of calm, and serene air,
"Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
"Which men call Earth,"

a peculiar character has been derived to the poetry of them both, which distinguishes their compositions from those of almost all the world besides? I have already enumerated some of the superior advantages of a truly virtuous poet, and presumed to state, that these are realized, in an unexampled degree, in Milton and Cowper. That they both owed this moral eminence to their *vivid sense of religion*, will, I conceive, need no demonstration, except what will arise to every reader of taste and feeling on examining their works. It will here, I think, be seen at once, that sublimity of conception, that delicacy of virtuous feeling, that majestic independence of mind, that quick relish for all the beauties of nature, at once so pure, and so exquisite, which we find ever occuring in them both, could not have existed in the same unrivalled degree, if their devotion had been less intense, and, of course, their minds more dissipated amongst low and distracting objects."

In printing this brief specimen from the manuscript of a modest writer, who is personally unknown to me, I hope I may lead him to make, for his own honour, a more extensive use of his production. His eloquent *remarks on* the congeniality of mind between Milton

and Cowper, may, possibly induce some readers to favour my intention of rendering Milton a contributor to the posthumous honours of Cowper, by the following proposal.

My departed friend having expressed a wish to me that an edition of Milton might be formed, in which our respective writings concerning him should appear united, I hope to accomplish that affectionate desire. If the public favour my idea, the whole profits of the book will be applied to the purpose of raising a marble MONUMENT in the metropolis, to Cowper, by the sculptor whose genius he particularly regarded, my friend Mr. Flaxman. The proposed edition is to contain Cowper's admirable translations from the Latin and Italian poetry of Milton, and all that is preserved of that unfinished Commentary, which he intended to continue and complete as a series of Dissertations on the Paradise Lost.

It is proposed that Cowper's Milton (for I so wish the edition to be called) shall consist of three quarto volumes, decorated with various engravings, at the price of six guineas: and those who intend to contribute in this manner to a national monument, in memory of Cowper, are requested to deposit their subscriptions either with Mr. JOHNSON, bookseller, of St. Paul's, or with Mr. EVANS, bookseller, of Pall-Mall.

As many persons may be inclined to subscribe to Cowper's monument, without subscribing to the intended Milton, it is presumed such persons will be gratified in being informed, that the two booksellers above-mentioned will receive any smaller sum as a contribution to the monument, and either faithfully devote whatever may be received to that purpose, or return the sum so advanced to every subscriber, if the purpose should be relinquished: It may, however, be reasonably

hoped, that a purpose where the feelings of natio esteem and love are so perfectly in unison with thos private friendship, will be happily accomplished, that many who feel how justly the pre-eminent char ter of Cowper is endeared to our country, will deli in contributing to perpetuate his renown, by the n honourable memorial of public affection.

FINIS.

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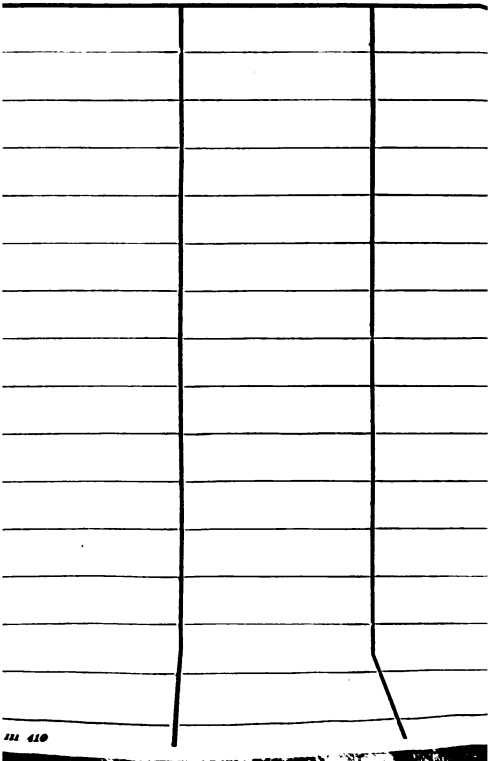

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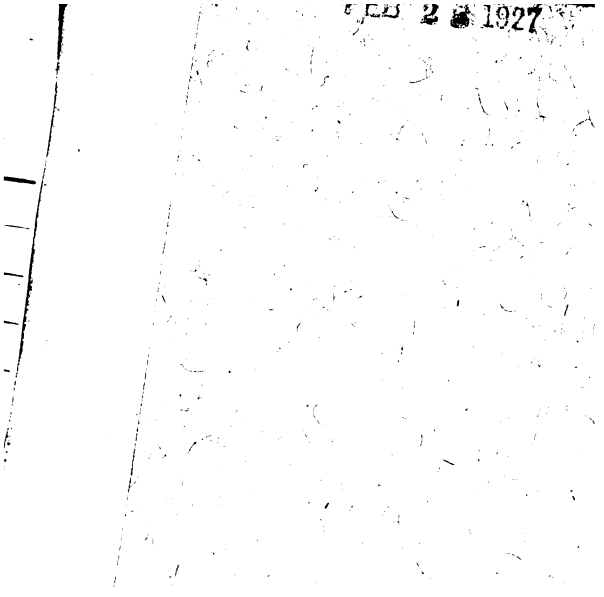
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